

JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE
JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL



AFSOF, Integration, and Joint Warfighting: Closing the Training Loop to Force Multiply and Succeed

by

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The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

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ABSTRACT

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This paper establishes the context for AFSOF and GPF integration, the analysis starts by looking at the future strategic landscape. Next it describes AFSOF's expected roles and missions, showing the SOF niche in this landscape. It then examines the integration imperative in two cases encompassing the challenges set forth in the NDS and QDR. Subsequently, the paper covers current training to reveal deficiencies towards fulfilling the integration imperative. Ultimately, this study provides recommendations to improve AFSOF integration training.

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1. INTRODUCTION

*Success is not final...*¹

-- Sir Winston Churchill

The relevance of the United States Special Operations Force's (SOF) roles and functions is expanding to an unprecedented level. In the midst of full stride world wide operations, SOF's core capabilities are thrust to the forefront of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and the nation's strategies for the foreseeable future. SOF, historically operating around and amongst, but not necessarily with, general purpose forces (GPF), is now recognized as a vital player in both the direct and indirect approaches in the GWOT campaign. The fact the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) was designated the lead Combatant Command for planning and synchronizing the GWOT campaign plan makes this acknowledgement clearly evident.²

This reality matched against the future's likely broad range of military operations (ROMO), its inherent threats, and full spectrum of capability requirements, glaringly highlights the need for integration with GPF to enable the *ways* and *means* to achieve SOF's objectives and the nation's desired strategic *ends*. The nature of this future global operating environment and scale of missions will drive increased integration of forces during complementary, not competing, SOF and GPF actions.³

¹ Sir Winston Churchill, http://thinkexist.com/quotation/success_is_not_final-failure_is_not_fatal-it_is/150143.html (extracted 1 Oct 07).

² President, *Unified Command Plan*. Washington, D.C., (5 May 2006).

³ Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense. *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*. Washington, D.C., (6 February 2006), 4. The QDR states the 21st century's complex strategic environment will require greater integration of forces, organizations and processes, and closer synchronization of actions.

Recent actions in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) have demonstrated SOF's effectiveness through countless successes. In Afghanistan, the world witnessed an impressively quick and operationally victorious unconventional warfare (UW) campaign carried out with a relatively small number of SOF, matched together with indigenous forces, and backed by U.S. airpower. Again, in the early stages of OIF, SOF played a decisive role. In one prime example, SOF, supported by GPF, engaged numerically superior Iraqi forces in the north along the Green Line and fixed them in place, delaying their movement south against the main coalition effort.⁴

While many operations have benefited from cases of excellent SOF and GPF integration, they are also replete with lessons learned confirming the need for continued improvement. The challenges SOF will face demand they not rest on past successes. SOF is obligated to look forward, build upon lessons learned, and predict imminent operational needs.

The unique role SOF will play in future operations now requires integration during planning and execution at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. This is particularly true as the potential for SOF as the supported force has risen dramatically. In the past, SOF was typically another capability added to someone else's plans. Now SOF leaders are responsible to plan and ensure synchronization of all forces at the strategic level.⁵ The nature of the operations will demand similar relationships at the operational

⁴ The 10 SFG, infiltrated largely by AFSOF via JSOTF MC-130s, actions with indigenous forces were in large part responsible for fixing Iraqi units along the Green Line, bordering the Kurdish Autonomous Zone, to keep them from moving south early in the war to confront coalition forces advancing from the south. This role was amplified by the denial of the 4th ID to enter Iraq from Turkey. This example demonstrates SOF's relevance in a largely conventional campaign.

⁵ This references the UCP mandate for USSOCOM to synchronize the GWOT.

and tactical levels. Unfortunately, the training to enhance skills for effective integration, or the *glue* which binds a concept to strategic, operational, and tactical actuality, is lacking.⁶ Too often these skills are learned late in a career, and as a result of “real time” immediate necessity.

Nowhere is this more the case than with Air Force Special Operations Forces (AFSOF). As a designated SOF force and often overlooked component of USSOCOM, AFSOF are key enablers to SOF’s many *ways* and *means*. Tied directly to the core tasks and relevance of SOF’s ground components, AFSOF face the same future challenges confronting the entire community. Accordingly, AFSOF’s ability to fulfill their missions will be affected by how well they can integrate with other forces in the joint environment.

As the individual AFSOF crewmember advances in position, they will encounter situations demanding joint integration in the tactical battle space and in staffs at the operational level. It is also likely this will occur before they are senior officers with formal joint education. Will their training best prepare them for this joint warfare? Currently the average AFSOF crewmember spends the first ten years of their career training to their tactical tasks, often to support or enable other SOF elements, with little exposure to GPF operations or joint planning outside of their particular actions. Does this training reality create an air component *enabler stovepipe*?⁷ Does the context of this *enabler stovepipe* require they understand joint warfare outside of their individual weapon system’s roles? If so, then the impact is obviously negative when AFSOF

⁶ Joint Special Operations University. “Educational Requirements Analysis for Academic Years 2005-2010.” Report conducted by Booz Allen Hamilton for JSOU, (8 June 2005), 35. Booz Allen conducted the analysis for the Joint Special Operations University and made the conclusion that the skill sets required for operating at the strategic, operational, and tactical level were not fully appreciated throughout the joint SOF community.

⁷ The term *enabler stovepipe* is not a standard term, but one the author is introducing to emphasize a condition. It refers to a condition where AFSOF members are solely concerned with their individual tactical tasks to support or conduct special operations.

members are faced with situations outside their *stovepipe*, requiring integration or its leaders to command and control (C2) joint partners.

The complex future environments AFSOF will operate within, and the challenges its members will face, reinforce the pertinence of these questions. The future spectrum of conflict will likely see AFSOF involved in actions ranging from small scale low visibility operations to large scale traditional warfare.⁸ Does current AFSOF training address this threat spectrum?

According to JP 3-05.1, *Joint Special Operations Task Force Operations*, effective SOF and GPF integration begins with peacetime planning and joint participation during training and exercises.⁹ Currently this interaction and training is few and far between for AFSOF. The doctrine implies understanding the need for integration, but exercising this integration on a relevant scale for the AFSOF operators and staffs is limited.

Regardless of the recognized need and the new initiatives described, the present and potential future training programs for AFSOF personnel do not provide adequate education and training for the challenges they will face, and the imperative integrated joint warfighting capability those challenges will demand.¹⁰

The past SOF paradigm of always operating alone and in complete secrecy is a cultural hurdle that today is largely crossed. Now, more tangible problems or obstacles to joint SOF and GPF training are exposed. The state of AFSOF preparation for integrated

⁸ For the purpose of this thesis, “low visibility” refers to low footprint and signature operations, including overt, clandestine, and covert operations.

⁹ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. *JP 3-05.1, Joint Special Operations Task Force Operations*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, (26 April 2007), III-8.

¹⁰ This assertion is backed by an overarching observation in the JSOU Educational Requirements Analysis For Academic Years 2005-2010, ES-6.

joint operations is one plagued by a high operational demand and low asset density (HD/LD), a lack of mandatory and consistent joint professional military education (JPME) across the junior and senior ranks, a training *stovepipe* grown from a history in supporting and enabler roles, and finally a lack of recognized joint integration imperative inside the community. The end result is the potential for future combat operations characterized with ad hoc, “on-the-job training” (OJT) style, learning, often late in the game, and deconflicted vice integrated actions.

Perhaps the greatest of these problems is the limited opportunity for collective joint training due to high operations tempo. Non-deployed training time must be prioritized towards mission sets viewed as most critical in the short term. With limited time and resources during the on-going long war, training must maximize the return on time invested for all participants. This unfortunately leaves little room to direct training efforts towards joint integration efforts. Special Operations Command Joint Forces Command (SOCJFCOM) exists to deliver this SOF and GPF integration training, but is hampered by this challenge and the scope of their audience. They can deliver and recommend excellent training, but scheduling inside this high operations tempo can currently only guarantee limited force exposure due to force availability.¹¹

The HD/LD problem cascades beyond exercise opportunities and into joint virtual training and classroom PME initiatives too. New programs designed by the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU), intended to address joint warfighting and integration, are not likely to be mandatory for AFSOF personnel, again due to operations tempo.

¹¹ SOCJFOM’s mission is the following: “Train conventional and special operations joint force commanders and their staffs in the employment Special Operations Forces (SOF), focusing on the full integration of SOF and conventional forces in both planning and execution to enhance warfighting readiness.” <http://www.socjfc.com.jfcom.mil/>, (retrieved 9 Dec 2007).

Discretionary attendance only results in disorganized attendance and often by the wrong target audience.¹²

Further hindering the introduction of effective joint training is the *enabler stovepipe* which many AFSOF operators fall into. The fact that many of AFSOF's operators are officers, dedicated to mastering their particular tactical tasks for the first ten to twelve years of their careers, creates a two-fold problem. While completely missing jointness in the formative early years, on the back-end of their career they must play joint "catch up" as they enter leadership roles requiring integration with, and potentially command of, non AFSOF forces.

Before September 11th, 2001 (9/11), the implications of this *stovepipe* were not as openly manifested. Now they are in the open and critical. The previous paradigm of primarily being a force provider integrated into someone else's plans is shattered. The real chance exists for GPF integration into SOF plans at all levels, beyond the overarching GWOT campaign plan.

Much of the reasoning why AFSOF still largely focuses its training within a *stovepipe*, stems from the lack of realization regarding the new imperative. AFSOF have accomplished their recent missions through tactical skill, bravery, and strong leadership. Unfortunately, their training has not shifted to address the new reality. AFSOF still has no standard joint warfighting PME, internal or external to joint SOF, too few large scale collective or virtual joint training events involving GPF, and negligible participation at the Joint National Training Center (JNTC), Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), or USAF Flag exercises at Nellis AFB. While the majority of what AFSOF trained for in

¹² JSOU Educational Requirements Analysis For Academic Years 2005-2010, ES-2.

the recent past is still relevant for future training, there is room for improvement in the joint integration category.

To add to the problem set, the issues are not only resident in training limitations between AFSOF and GPF, but to a degree also reside within the joint SOF community itself, amid AFSOF and other SOF. AFSOF has no standardized training for joint SOF planning. As a result, AFSOF operators, particularly junior officers, don't get regular exposure to joint planning considerations outside of their individual weapon system and instead learn via OJT. This has a domino effect felt later as they are tasked to plan above the tactical level, which again results in OJT. A recent analysis of the Joint Special Operations University's educational requirements made the following overarching observation,

Near-universal agreement exists across the joint SOF community that the current joint special operations force is exceptionally well trained in individual and collective skills at the tactical level. However, the study also determined that the same force is not well prepared for integrated planning or force application at the operational and strategic levels of warfare.¹³

SOF operations almost always require joint support or coordination. As a result, the SOF community is often referred to as "inherently joint".¹⁴ While the structure of SOF generally makes this more the case than other forces, it does not mean there isn't work to be done. Requiring, and providing, support and coordination does not alone translate to an understanding of how joint SOF partners operate, let alone joint GPF partners.

¹³ JSOU Educational Requirements Analysis For Academic Years 2005-2010, ES-6.

¹⁴ Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force. AFDD 2-7, *Special Operations*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, (16 December 2005), 1.

Instead of being forced to conduct last minute “spin-up” training for unforeseen conflicts, how does this conundrum lend itself to training to fight tomorrow’s war and not the last one? Where does the responsibility lie to ensure the training does occur? The answer is simple; it collectively lies across all the different levels within the AFSOF community, from the squadron to Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) headquarters, with support above that from USSOCOM.

This thesis will address the problems introduced above to support the following thesis statement: *AFSOF must institute formal changes to current training to improve integration; both with GPF, and internal to SOF, to enable unified action and thus increase success in their full spectrum of missions.*

The term *integration* refers to “the arrangement of military forces and their actions to create a force that operates by engaging as a whole”.¹⁵ *Unified action* is “the synchronization, coordination, and/or integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operations to achieve the unity of effort”.¹⁶ The intent is not to get distracted on word choice, but the emphasis on *integration* versus *synchronization*, which is part of USSOCOM’s charter for GWOT, is because the *integration* definition encompasses more meaning towards *unified action*.

Synchronization is “the arrangement of military actions in time, space, and purpose to produce maximum relative combat power at a decisive place and time”.¹⁷ Where the emphasis with *synchronization* is on timing, *integration* considers priority and effect.¹⁸

¹⁵ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. *JP 1-02, Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. (12 April 2001 (Amended thru 17 September 2006)), 268.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 565.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 527.

¹⁸ Chief of Staff, United States Air Force. AFDD 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, (17 November, 2003), 7.

Additionally, *integration* is paramount in the DOD Training Transformation (T2) mission objectives.

The relevance of this thesis clearly lies on how AFSOF will be best prepared to meet future challenges. Not prioritizing training efforts to include some order and substance towards integration will result in less than optimal unified action as SOF and GPF prosecute the GWOT. Without doing this, a gap will remain between actual and desired capability, and the promises of T2 will be hollow for AFSOF. Reinvigorating AFSOF training to incorporate joint integration will have a force multiplying effect across the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of warfare.

This paper will start by establishing context for the analysis, first looking at the future strategic landscape, in order to highlight the requisite capabilities and show the relevance of AFSOF within it. Next it will describe AFSOF's expected roles and missions. It will then continue analysis by examining the integration imperative in two cases which encompass the challenges set forth in the NDS and QDR. Logical analysis, using examples and cases, of expected AFSOF missions, will highlight the need for integration via ends, ways, and means assessment. Subsequently, the paper will cover current training to determine if there are deficiencies towards the integration imperative.

Ultimately, once the compelling need for integration and training is described, this study will provide recommendations for improvement. These comprehensive recommendations will address improvements affecting the tactical, operational and strategic levels of warfare.

The DOD T2 effort towards joint warfighting and integration goes well beyond AFSOF and integration with SOF and GPF, to plans for the entire interagency (IA).

However, for the scope of this paper, only AFSOF is addressed. Additionally, it will focus on aircrew, as they are the primary set of operators in AFSOF. Similar arguments could be made for all AFSOF personnel, but those are beyond the research scale of this paper. Additionally, the research is limited only to unclassified discussion regarding the majority of AFSOF units and how they are organized and trained.

2. THE FUTURE CHALLENGES AND THEIR IMPACT ON AFSOF

*Despite our strategic advantages, we are vulnerable to challenges ranging from external attacks to indirect threats posed by aggression and dangerous instability.*¹⁹

--2005 National Defense Strategy

Prior to examining the need for AFSOF integration and the related training, it is important to first understand the future strategic operating environment and what implications its complex problems hold for the application of SOF and AFSOF. What military capabilities will it require from AFSOF? According to JP-1, this understanding is critical to determine the correct force application. JP-1 states:

Political and military leaders must consider the employment of military force in operations characterized by a complex, interconnected, and global *operational environment* -- the composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander.²⁰

As the thesis statement implies, is there even a need for more AFSOF joint integration training in the future operational environment? This chapter will explore that question, mapping the environment and then the threats, and establish a baseline appreciation for their roles and relevance. Additionally, it will open the door to comprehend the joint integration imperatives for their missions. The necessity of AFSOF's future role must be established to warrant further investigation of the thesis.

Defining the Future Operating Environment

Developing a completely accurate template for what the future operating environment will look like is virtually impossible, but there is little doubt it will include a

¹⁹ Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense. *National Defense Strategy*. Washington, D.C., (2005), 1.

²⁰ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. *JP 1, Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. (14 May 2007), 1-6.

changing mixture of traditional and unconventional threats that make it one of the most complex in history. A particularly bleak, but realistic picture was painted by Dr. John Hillen, Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs:

...Instead, we imagine the brewing threats of 'Perfect Storms' of failed governments, ethnic stratification, religious violence, humanitarian disasters, catalytic regional crises, and the proliferation of dangerous weapons. We see lagging economies, unintegrated and disenfranchised populations, transnational crime, illicit sub-national power structures, and destabilizing bulges of uneducated and unemployed youth.²¹

The approaches for employment of the aspects of power within the DIME (Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic) construct will all have to contend with the repercussions of globalization, the potential proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional instabilities, and the inherent changing nature of warfare. According to the NMS, three aspects of the future environment will have a particularly prominent impact on our military strategy. First, the NMS states there will be a wider range of adversaries, both state and non-state actors, who can threaten U.S. interests. Second, the battlespace will be more complex and distributed. Finally, the impact of technology diffusion and access will affect the character of future conflict.²²

As these three aspects imply, complexity and ambiguity will be core environmental characteristics as the military is employed in largely preventative roles, often in reaction to both state and non-state threats utilizing traditional and non-traditional asymmetric capabilities. While the focus will primarily be on operations related to the GWOT, these environmental themes will impact all activities and create potential for conflict even beyond the scope of GWOT.

²¹ United States Department of Defense. *Irregular Warfare (IW) Joint Operating Concept (JOC)*, Version 1.0. Washington, D.C., (11 September 2007), 11.

²² Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. *National Military Strategy*. Washington, D.C., (2004), 4.

The most prominent environmental theme will be the continued role of globalization, defined as “the worldwide integration and increasing flows of trade, capital, ideas, and people.”²³ While the impact of globalization’s spreading interdependence may someday dramatically reduce the amount of conflict worldwide, by making it too costly for all parties, in the near term it provides a venue for both state and particularly increasingly powerful non-state actors to operate asymmetrically against American interests. Couple globalization’s *leveling* influence with cultural and socioeconomic problems throughout the world, and the potential for persistent future conflict is high.

The National Intelligence Council’s 2020 Project report, *Mapping the Global Future*, referred to the scope of globalization’s impact:

We see globalization - growing interconnectedness reflected in the expanded flows of information, technology, capital, goods, services, and people throughout the world – as an overarching “mega-trend,” a force so ubiquitous that it will substantially shape all the other major trends in the world of 2020.²⁴

If the scale of globalization’s influence will permeate throughout all societies, how will it affect military operations? Simply put, it will manifest itself in enemies leveraging new asymmetric threat capabilities. American adversaries already look to avenues around direct, and nearly futile, military confrontation, as evidenced by the insurgency warfare waged against our forces today. Globalization exacerbates the problem. The leveling of the playing field, primarily in informational technologies, and the vulnerability of interdependent economic markets makes western powers more

²³ Thomas Barnett, *Blueprint for Action*. (New York: Putnam, 2005), xvi.

²⁴ National Intelligence Council. “Mapping the Global Future”, National Intelligence Council Project 2020 report, (Dec 2004), 10.

susceptible to these asymmetric attacks. This prediction is echoed in the 2006

Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR):

Globalization enables many positive developments such as the free movement of capital goods and services, information, people and technology, but it is also accelerating the transmission of disease, the transfer of advanced weapons, the spread of extremist ideologies, the movement of terrorists and the vulnerability of major economic segments.²⁵

What catalysts would motivate adversaries to exploit the dynamics globalization creates? Furthermore, what other conditions will exist that eventually transmit to SOF employment? Unfortunately, the 20th century's traditional security challenges still remain, along with a mix of budding new evils. Growing disparities in wealth distribution, rising cultural clashes and identity politics, ethnic migrations and shifting demographics, resource competition, and impending global environmental changes and their societal impacts are all issues that will weigh negatively against stability and lead to conflict.²⁶

The National Intelligence Council (NIC), among others, has reported on an *arc of instability*, spanning from Sub-Saharan Africa, through North Africa, into the Middle-East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, South and Central Asia, and through to parts of Southeast Asia.²⁷ Countries within this region are commonly “behind the globalization curve” and often experience many of the conditions listed above.

Numerous prominent authors also write about these discouraging characteristics. Among them, Thomas Barnett describes countries in this arc as part of the *non-*

²⁵ QDR, 24

²⁶ These characteristics are commonly mentioned repeatedly in numerous sources. Particularly relevant were studies and their presentations by TRADOC and the NIC's 2020 Project report.

²⁷ National Intelligence Council. “Mapping the Global Future”, 97.

integrating gap, or “Regions of the world that are largely disconnected from the global economy and the rule sets that define its stability.”²⁸

In *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, Samuel Huntington, builds on this problematic landscape, describing the future environment as truly multipolar, divided among five distinctly different civilizations. He states, “In this new world, local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilizations. The rivalry of the superpowers is replaced by the clash of civilizations.”²⁹

These descriptions depict regions ripe for regional conflict, and areas vulnerable to violent extremism taking advantage of weakened states and impoverished societies. According to the NIC, a pervasive sense of insecurity will exist as a result of the environmental factors described above.³⁰ While the chance for major conflict between great powers is low, the potential will remain for large scale traditional warfare. This will particularly be the case in areas susceptible to miscalculation and escalation stemming from the factors previously mentioned. There is little debate the potential exists for regional conflict against states like Iran, Syria, and North Korea which would involve massive forces engaged in largely traditional warfare. Obviously, conflict, however unlikely in the near term, involving the rising states China and India could also be huge in scale.

More likely to occur though will be internal conflicts and regional conflicts, often stemming from these internal problems. The NIC made the following prediction regarding this type of conflict, “Weak governments, lagging economies, religious

²⁸ Barnett, xvii.

²⁹ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 28.

³⁰ National Intelligence Council. “Mapping the Global Future”, 14.

extremism, and youth bulges will align to create a perfect storm for internal conflict in certain regions.”³¹ This is where the true near term potential lies for large scale traditional military operations. The *spillover* effect of these internal conflicts could possibly cross borders.

Getting a grasp on all these environmental factors and capturing the essence of what challenges they impose is difficult. The *U.S. National Defense Strategy* (NDS) has organized the threats, or challenges, the operating environment presents into mature and emerging threats from four overlapping categories which threaten U.S. interests. These categories include traditional, irregular, catastrophic, and disruptive challenges.³²

The NDS defines each of these challenges as the following:

Traditional: challenges posed by states employing recognized military capabilities and forces in well-understood forms of military competition and conflict.

Irregular: challenges coming from those employing “unconventional” methods to counter the *traditional* advantages of stronger opponents.

Catastrophic: challenges involving the acquisition, possession, and use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or methods producing WMD-like effects.

Disruptive: challenges coming from adversaries who develop and use breakthrough technologies to negate current U.S. advantages in key operational domains.³³

Within and overlapping amongst these challenges, the GWOT *long war* is the obvious top priority and presents a non-conventional threat unparalleled in scale,

³¹ National Intelligence Council. “Mapping the Global Future”, 14.

³² NDS, 2.

³³ Ibid., 2.

amplifying the three latter challenges.³⁴ Performing an intuitive risk analysis quickly shows that our forces must still be prepared for all of these threats. Regardless of where the preponderance of the capability portfolio lies, the risk of not being able to conduct dominant traditional warfare, in deference to more likely irregular threats, is one the nation can't afford.

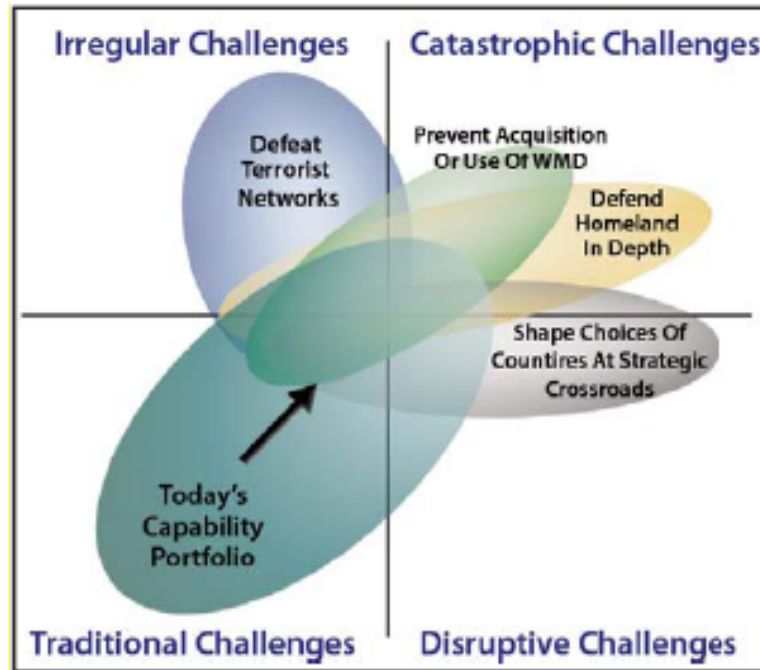


Figure 1. “Quad Chart” of Mature and Emerging Challenges³⁵

Bottom line, the future operating environment will be complex, fluid, indistinct, and will have high conflict potential on a wide ranging scale. As depicted in Figure 1, the majority of U.S. military capability is currently focused toward traditional challenges. Will the nature of warfare demand improvement to meet the challenges in the other three categories? Furthermore, if the potential for conflict is high, how will it manifest itself in the battlespace?

³⁴ President. *National Security Strategy*. Washington, D.C., (2006), 43. The term *long war* is found in numerous references, most notably the NSS.

³⁵ NDS, 2.

The Operational Environment's Impact on the Character of Warfare

Just as the types of conflict will potentially span the spectrum, so too will the types of warfare. First, the chance for traditional, force on force, maneuver warfare will remain. The rise of new global powers, the potential for regional conflict against threats like Iran and North Korea, and the potential for new adversaries emerging from weak or ungoverned areas in the arc of instability, make this apparent. However, recent history shows that our enemies will likely try to operate below a threshold that would involve direct confrontation using traditional conventional warfare.

When conflict does occur, whether it be from within the arc of instability or elsewhere, America's enemies will probably take a holistic approach emphasizing asymmetric ways and means. Additionally, as enemies adapt and look for weaknesses, our forces will find themselves in conflicts involving multiple forms of warfare - conventional, irregular, etc.

Related to this asymmetric theme, Colonel Thomas Hammes, in *The Sling and the Stone*, argues a new form of warfare, fourth-generation warfare (4GW), is gaining prevalence over America's specialty, third-generation or maneuver warfare. According to Hammes, "Fourth-generation warfare uses all available networks-political, economic, social, and military - to convince the enemy's political decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit. It is an evolved form of insurgency."³⁶ Instead of trying to defeat military forces, 4GW uses society's networks to impact the enemy's will. First used by Mao, 4GW uses the advantages globalization presents to asymmetrically get around America's tremendous traditional military capability. For an example of this "network" effect, in the GWOT, today's

³⁶ Thomas Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone* (St Paul: Zenith Press, 2004), 2.

communications capabilities aid violent extremists as they attempt to globally spread their message and build upon and recruit from an underground radical Muslim identity base.

Not surprisingly, this trend to asymmetric forms of warfare also explains why Irregular Warfare (IW) and insurgency are favored forms today and likely for the future. IW, though not yet officially defined in joint doctrine, is a virtual “buzz word” phrase found throughout key U.S. strategy documents, and in joint doctrine used to encompass a large degree of the type of warfare seen in today’s environment. The working definition from the IW Joint Operating Concept (JOC) defines IW as:

A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant populations. IW favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capabilities, in order to erode an adversary’s power, influence, and will.³⁷

This definition so well captures the asymmetric nature of the GWOT enemy and their intent, that its official inclusion into doctrine is warranted. As is often the case in insurgency and counter-insurgency (COIN) warfare, an important center of gravity lies with the focus on the populace or “relevant population”.³⁸ The strategic environment with its weak or failing states, affected by the numerous factors previously described, provides fertile ground for IW, well beyond operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. To quote the IW JOC, “The competition for the contested populations within these weak or failing states will be one of the key objectives of IW.”³⁹ The pertinence of preparing for this type of

³⁷ IW JOC, 6.

³⁸ Headquarters, Departments of the Army and Navy, FM 3-24 (MCWP 3-33.5). *Counterinsurgency*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, (15 December 2006), 3-13.

³⁹ IW JOC, 11.

warfare is evidenced in both the NDS and QDR, which both direct improvements in IW.⁴⁰

Analysis of the IW definition is also very telling of future actions for SOF and AFSOF. One of the IW definition's key strengths is its inclusion of a variety of missions, or types of warfare, under its IW umbrella. The following is just a partial list of possible activities conducted under the auspices of IW: Insurgency, COIN, Unconventional Warfare (UW), Terrorism, Counterterrorism (CT), foreign internal defense (FID), stabilization, security, transition, and reconstruction operations (SSTRO), strategic communications (SC), psychological operations (PSYOP), and information operations (IO).⁴¹ A common thread throughout all these missions, as represented by Figure 2, is the particular relevance of the population.

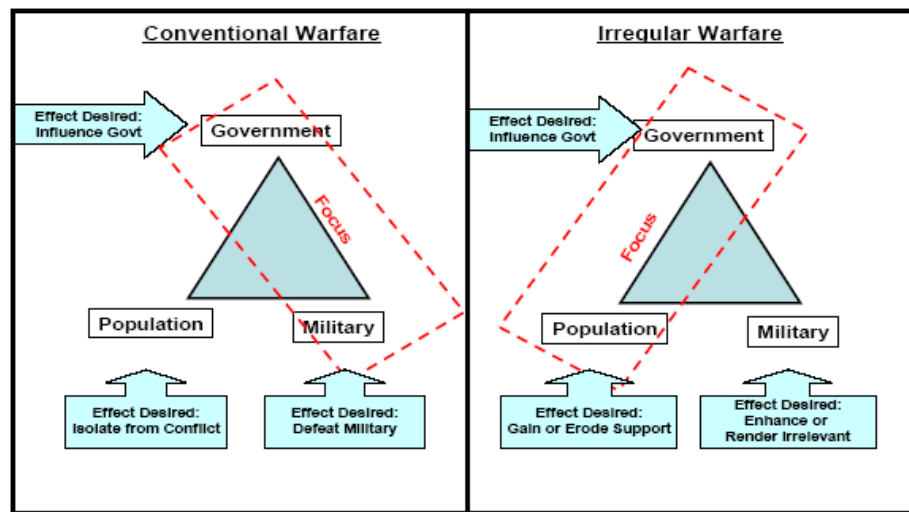


Figure 2. Contrasting Conventional and Irregular Warfare.⁴²

Whatever form of warfare AFSOF may encounter in the operating environment, the proliferation of weapons technology, to all level of combatants, could drive or require

⁴⁰ Multiple references are made throughout the QDR and NDS directing improvements in mounting IW and defeating an adversary waging IW.

⁴¹ IW JOC, 9.

⁴² Ibid., 8.

GPF integration to support AFSOF simply for mission survival. Relatively unimpressive conventional and unconventional adversaries will have the technology and weaponry to create anti-access or direct threat issues for SOF forces.⁴³ For example, a SOF led COIN operation against an unconventional, but well armed enemy, may require large scale GPF integration at the tactical and operational levels to ensure AFSOF survival in that campaign. Simply put, “Technology diffusion and access to advance weapons and delivery systems have significant implications for military capabilities.”⁴⁴ AFSOF will not have to operate against a near peer military competitor to face threat situations exceeding their internal capabilities.

In the end, the operating environment is not eliminating the need to primarily prepare for conventional warfare, but raising the stakes to be prepared for all forms now more than ever. However, with the clear and necessary national priority on GWOT, it’s necessary to examine specific GWOT implications for AFSOF, before deriving general capability sets the strategic operating environment demands.

Specific GWOT Implications for SOF

While examining the environment described above reveals a diverse set of challenges, what does a closer analysis of the GWOT, clearly the highest strategic priority, show for AFSOF? This starts by defining who the current enemy is.

In the GWOT, the U.S. faces a transnational enemy with long term ideological strategic objectives. Defeating this enemy will require a comprehensive strategy

⁴³ It is not critical to the argument to present the obvious about weapons technology proliferation. Furthermore, classification level concerns prevent including hard data about weapons and the relative survivability of AFSOF. The fact over 150,000 MANPADS are in reportedly in circulation around the globe is just a minor example of the weapons technology proliferation.

⁴⁴ NMS, 6.

executed with decisiveness and patience. The *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* (NMSP-WOT) defines the primary enemy:

In the GWOT, the primary enemy is a transnational movement of extremist organizations, networks, and individuals – and their state and non-state supporters – which have in common that they exploit Islam and use terrorism for ideological ends.⁴⁵

Acknowledging this enemy makes readily apparent the vastness of associated potential mission sets. In addition to the challenges from ideological extremism, SOF will face a future riddled with social and political instability bred from sprawling urbanization, resource competition, pandemics, and environmental deterioration.⁴⁶ SOF may concurrently be involved in non-traditional IW against non-state entities and in traditional nation state war; both stemming from GWOT related causes. Operating and succeeding in this environment will require flexibility to succeed across the full ROMO, against all four challenge categories, and in multiple operational roles.

In this challenging environment, anticipating SOF's and hence AFSOF's future significance, and its associated requisite GPF integration, flows directly from the GWOT strategy and USSOCOM's relative engagement posturing. This posturing builds from the national GWOT strategy's desired *ends*:

The national strategic aims are to defeat violent extremism as a threat to our way of life as free and open society; and create a global environment inhospitable to violent extremists and all who support them.⁴⁷

The military's strategic approach oriented towards achieving these national GWOT *ends* involves both direct and indirect approaches, viewed as two separate, although often synergized, *ways*:

⁴⁵ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism*. Washington, D.C., (2006), 13.

⁴⁶ United States Special Operations Command. *Capstone Concept for Special Operation*. (2006), 4.

⁴⁷ NMSP-WOT, 5.

Direct approaches primarily focus on protecting our interests while attacking the enemy. Indirect approaches primarily focus on establishing conditions for others to achieve success.⁴⁸

How will these approaches impact SOF? Is AFSOF prepared for the implications of engagement in these approaches? The application of these direct and indirect approaches is further articulated in the *National Security Strategy*:

In the short run, the fight involves using military force and other instruments of national power to kill or capture the terrorists, deny them safe haven or control of any nation; prevent them from gaining access to WMD; and cut off their sources of support. In the long run, winning the war on terror means winning the battle of ideas, for it is ideas that can turn the disenchanted into murderers willing to kill innocent victims.⁴⁹

The importance of the indirect approach is described by Joseph Nye in, *Soft Power*, where he adds to the portrayal of globalization and the multipolar world with his description of what is required to succeed in the intricate new environment. In this new integrated world, he highlights the need for utilizing multiple forms of political approaches, hitting on the importance of *soft power*, or the ability to shape the preferences of others, vice *hard power*, typified by inducements or threats.⁵⁰ This concept is definitely relevant considering the spread of IW engagement and its primacy in GWOT.

Barnett proposes measures that also fall in line with the soft power and indirect approaches to problems in the operating environment. The *non-integrated gap* he describes includes the countries primarily susceptible to violent extremism and IW tactics. To close this gap, and hence root out the conditions giving birth to extremism, he argues “we need a military that will wage peace just as effectively as it now wages

⁴⁸ NMSP-WOT, 6.

⁴⁹ NSS, 9.

⁵⁰ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success In World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 5.

war.”⁵¹ What is involved in actions to wage the peace? They will most likely fall in line with preventative indirect approaches, similar to the mission sets commonly associated with IW, and those typically performed by SOF.

With this background behind the expected GWOT approaches in mind, the link between strategy and SOF becomes even more obvious in view of the documented strategic military objectives. The NMSP-WOT strategy details six objectives tied to these direct and indirect ways:

1. Deny terrorists what they need to operate and survive.
2. Enable partner nations to counter terrorism.
3. Deny WMD/E proliferation, recover and eliminate uncontrolled materials, and increase capacity for consequence management.
4. Defeat terrorists and their organizations.
5. Counter state and non-state support for terrorism in coordination with other U.S. Government agencies and partner nations.
6. Contribute to the establishment of conditions that counter ideological support for terrorism.⁵²

While on some level the entire DOD is engaged towards these objectives, SOF’s nine core tasks are suited particularly well when compared against them. The core tasks are as follows⁵³:

<i>Unconventional Warfare</i>	<i>Foreign Internal Defense</i>	<i>Civil Affairs</i>
<i>Direct Action</i>	<i>Information & Psy Ops</i>	<i>Counterterrorism</i>
<i>Special Reconnaissance</i>	<i>WMD Counterproliferation</i>	<i>GWOT synchronization</i>

USSOCOM’s unique suitability to accomplishing GWOT’s tasks is understood. Chosen as the lead Combatant Command to create the DOD GWOT campaign plan, USSOCOM has planned an integrated approach, involving both direct and indirect

⁵¹ Barnett, 4.

⁵² NMSP-WOT, 6.

⁵³ United States Special Operations Command. *Posture Statement* (2007), 1. This list revised the list from JP 3-05, by adding GWOT synchronization and combining information and psychological operations.

methods.⁵⁴ In line with the *ways* delivered in the NMSP-WOT, the direct approach, “involves the immediate goals of pursuing those responsible for terrorism and defending the homeland”, and the indirect approach, which receives the greatest emphasis, “comprises those actions taken to attack the roots of terrorism and eliminate its further growth.”⁵⁵ Figure 3 depicts the lines of operation included in these direct and indirect approaches. While the primacy of initially gaining the initiative, and ensuring security, drives early direct approaches, clearly the preponderance of operations depicted are indirect and preventative lines of operation.

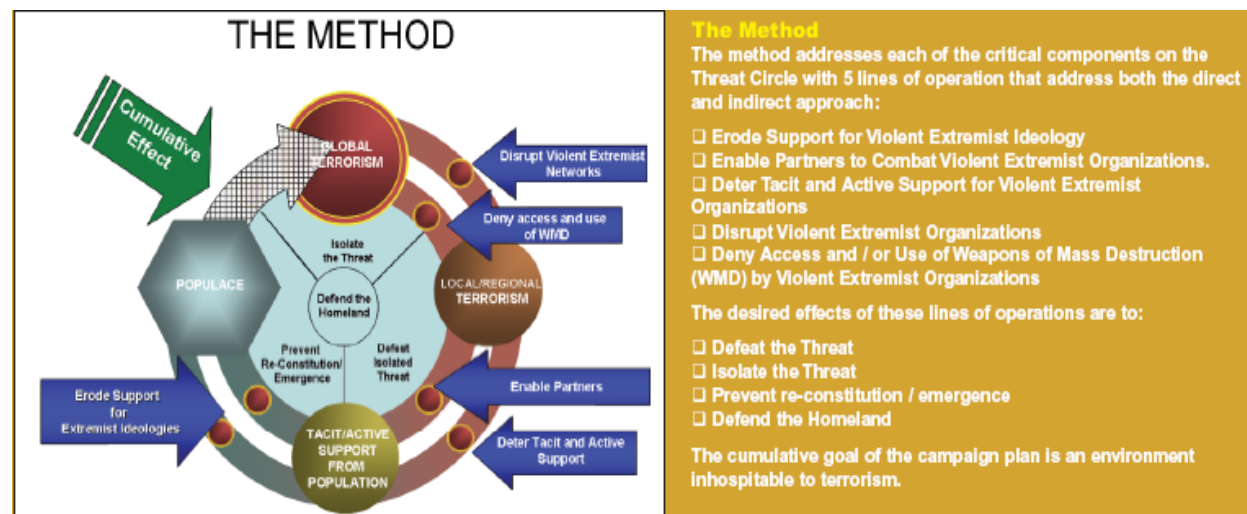


Figure 3. USSOCOM Integrated Approach Method.⁵⁶

Aligned with the NMSP-WOT, the goal or endstate of the GWOT campaign plan is the establishment of an environment inhospitable to terrorism. SOF’s nine core tasks again fall in line easily with these two approaches. AFSOF directly conducts or supports each of the core tasks and, not to state the obvious, this is where AFSOF can expect to expend a great deal of energy. Civil affairs, foreign internal defense, information and,

⁵⁴ USSOCOM Posture Statement, 4.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 4.

psychological operations missions are the epitome of indirect or shaping actions, while the remaining clearly fit the direct “pursuing” and “defending” direct approach. While most of the six NMSP-WOT objectives reflect a *hard power* personality in their writing, obviously the *soft power*, or indirect approach, will also be prevalent, and this is where a true fit or *niche market* is present for SOF’s skills. An example of this niche for AFSOF is present in the fact that the only U.S. Air Force combat aviation advisory (CAA) or dedicated foreign internal defense unit is the 6th Special Operations Squadron, resident in AFSOC.

As stated earlier, effects in IW should largely target the relevant population. Many of SOF’s core tasks do exactly this, psychological operations, civil affairs, and foreign internal defense (FID) being the clear matches. This application between SOF and the future operating environment was noted by transformation and network centric expert, Arthur Cebrowski. He stated, “We need the ability to look, to understand and to operate deeply within the fault lines of societies where, increasingly, we find the frontiers of national security. Is it any wonder that there is a sharply increased focus on Special Operations Forces?”⁵⁷

The importance of SOF’s capability sets, compared to GWOT and IW demands, are further validated in the QDR when it states, “Joint ground forces will continue to take on more of the tasks performed by today’s special operations forces.”⁵⁸ Not only does this imply their value in GWOT, this common mission theme between GPF and SOF also points an obvious finger at future joint integrated operations. Does this mean AFSOF

⁵⁷ Arthur Cebrowski, "Transforming Transformation," *Transformation Trends* (19 April 2004), 4 (accessed at http://www.oft.osd.mil/librara/librarv_files/trends_367_Transformation%20Trends-19%20Anril%20%202004%20Issue.pdf on 5 November 2007)

⁵⁸ QDR, 42.

will be supporting more GPF conducting SOF-like missions in the future? As the QDR emphasis on IW and SOF indicates, the scale of operations and need to force multiply resources and capabilities will likely drive it.

Force Planning Implications

During this time of war, the QDR has directed a force planning construct dividing DOD activities into three objective areas; Homeland Defense, War on Terror/Irregular (Asymmetric) Warfare, and Conventional Campaigns. Understanding the implications of each activity area, this construct signifies the potential future scale of SOF and AFSOF employment. Consequently, this full range of employment possibilities points to the high potential for joint operations, and hence integration.

In each of the objective areas, the QDR provides general desired capabilities guidance for steady state or continuous operations, and surge or episodic operations.⁵⁹ Of particular relevance are the levels of activity in the GWOT/IW area and the Conventional Campaigns area. In the GWOT/IW area, steady state activity calls for deterrence and defense against external transnational terrorist attacks, enabling partner capacity, and conduct of multiple globally distributed irregular operations of varying length. Additionally, this steady state calls for employing GPF to build partner capacity and conduct long duration COIN operations. Though this last reference states “general purpose forces”, it would likely be in coordination with SOF, as it hits directly in line with SOF’s core tasks. The surge activities of the GWOT/IW area equates to activity levels comparable to present day simultaneous levels of effort in OIF and OEF. Specifically it dictates conduct of “a large-scale, potentially long duration irregular

⁵⁹ QDR, 36.

warfare campaign including counterinsurgency and security, stability, transition and reconstruction operations.”⁶⁰

Just as analysis of the NMSP-WOT objectives shows obvious ties to SOF’s core tasks, so do both the steady state and surge aspects of this area. Additionally, the types of GWOT/IW actions included in steady state and surge activities will be characterized by sustained, long duration, SOF and GPF intervention. Indirect approaches do not typically have immediate conclusions. COIN takes years to accomplish, and so do effective FID operations to build partner capacity. This again equates to a great amount of AFSOF participation.

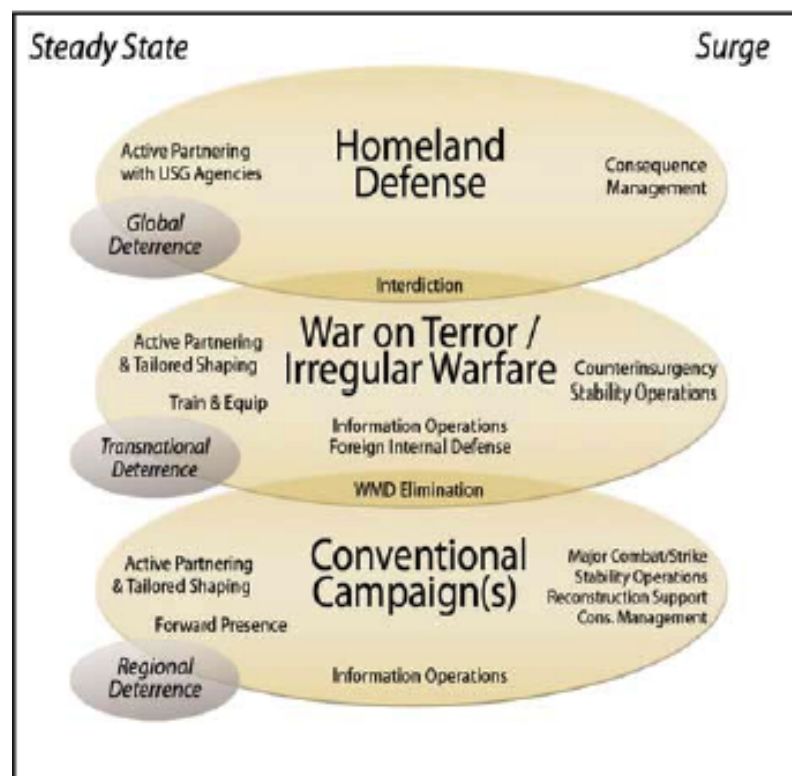


Figure 4. QDR Force Planning Construct.⁶¹

⁶⁰ QDR, 38. This reference is for the entire paragraph, including the quoted material.

⁶¹ Ibid., 38.

The Conventional Campaigns steady state condition speaks primarily to deterrence activities and, again, building partner capacity. In a surge condition, this area calls for waging two nearly simultaneous conventional campaigns, or one if one is already engaged in a large scale and long duration IW campaign.⁶² Like with the previous area, this category contains a huge opportunity for SOF involvement, even beyond FID which would be associated with building partner capacity, and the potential large scale IW campaign. Recent OIF operations demonstrated this potential, as SOF in northern Iraq successfully engaged in large scale UW to fix Iraqi divisions in place and prevent them from a rapid move to the south against the main conventional effort. As a follow-on chapter will show, a future conventional campaign could involve a massive SOF effort once more. Again, match these predicted levels of effort against the role of the GPF, and the path is clear to joint operations and their requisite integration to achieve success.

The application of SOF towards the *ways* described above, translates to an immense training and execution challenge. The GWOT operations tempo and required capabilities portfolio will demand more from SOF and AFSOF's operators and leaders than ever in history. Recognition of this demand was evidenced recently in a mandated 15% SOF size increase.⁶³ However, despite increases in size and capability, SOF can not, nor does it desire to, conduct all its operations alone. Furthermore, manning increases will not only take time to become a physical reality, but will not take away the immediate and future integration training need. If anything, increasing the size of SOF adds to the likelihood of joint SOF and GPF operations.

⁶² QDR, 39.

⁶³ QDR, 5 This size increase is largely in additional ground forces and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets.

Overarching Capability Implications

Acknowledging the strategic operating environment described above, its impact on the character of warfare, the specific GWOT objectives and USSOCOM approaches, and the QDR force planning construct, and it is possible to derive generic capability implications for SOF and AFSOF. These capability implications provide more indication for the level of AFSOF effort and necessary joint integration. It is evident SOF will have an increased role, with likely more joint interaction. If this is the case, then what is important next is to establish what is critical to ensuring SOF and AFSOF succeed in this prominent role, and what aspects of their interaction with joint partners is critical to this success. Ultimately this is relevant to establishing AFSOF's integration and training needs.

What do the Quad Chart challenges, IW, and 4GW imply for AFSOF? With an ambiguous future it is difficult to quantify all the specific threats, so the military must follow a capability based approach, looking at *how* the enemy will fight vice *which* enemy will be fought, to determining necessary capabilities. As stated, up front and at a minimum, SOF and AFSOF will be tasked to execute all their core tasks. Also up front, SOF must be capable of mission accomplishment across the full spectrum of conflict, from traditional to irregular. SOF's core tasks and GWOT tasks drive at specific AFSOF roles. The operating environment's challenges and how SOF will execute, amplify the broader capability requirements, which will likely involve greater force integration at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Just as SOF plays a key role in the large OEF and OIF efforts, it is possible they will again be heavily involved in future regional conflicts and large IW operations. As such, SOF will be called upon to execute its

missions in denied access territory as part of large primarily conventional efforts, and in smaller clandestine roles. Even small clandestine SOF forces executing strategic objectives may require a joint effort due to the proliferation of advanced threat capabilities, or simply due to the scale of enemy opposition.

On the side of airpower, SOF will clearly continue to need airpower's effects internally, with AFSOF, and externally from the larger joint combat air forces (CAF). A recent RAND study on the implications of GWOT for U.S. forces made the following statement regarding airpower:

The hallmark of EBO (effects based operations) is combining modern Air Force capabilities—information superiority, mobility, and precision strike—with complementary capabilities from the other military services and government agencies. Future battlefields most likely will be discontinuous, with shadowy hostile forces organized in small, unlinked groups. Eliminating these forces will require integration of air and ground forces on a scale even greater than today's.⁶⁴

Understanding the benefits of airpower in IW and COIN helps draw the logical line to AFSOF's impact, which relates to expected participation levels and joint integration likelihoods. Direct to the case for airpower's relevant role in IW, the U.S. Air Force recently published new IW doctrine in AFDD 2-3, *Irregular Warfare*. In this doctrine, Air Force Chief of Staff, General Michael Moseley states the following about airpower and IW:

We must be able to articulate Air Force capabilities and contributions to the irregular warfare fight, with its unique attributes and requirements. Employed properly, airpower (to include air, space and cyberspace capabilities) produces asymmetric advantages that can be effectively leveraged by joint force commanders in virtually every aspect of irregular warfare.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Angel Rabasa, et al., "Beyond al-Qaeda: The Global Jihadist Movement." RAND report prepared for the Air Force (2006), 166.

⁶⁵ Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force, AFDD 2-3, *Irregular Warfare*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office (1 August 2007), foreward.

Of the seventeen Air Force functions, AFDD 2-3 specifically describes seven key capabilities most likely to be employed in IW. These are: building partner capacity, UW, intelligence/counterintelligence, mobility, agile combat support, precision engagement, and command and control.⁶⁶ It is important to note, when AFDD 2-3 mentions these key capabilities, it is not specifically referring to AFSOF employing them. The next chapter will discuss specific AFSOF capabilities and roles, but obviously AFSOF has a traditional role in building partner country capacity, UW, mobility, and precision engagement. The fact these are mentioned in doctrine as generic air capabilities, indicates the prospective integration of conventional and AFSOF air assets towards them. Not mentioned in the seven, but a given for virtually any campaign or operation today is air superiority. Our forces have had the benefit of operating in a fairly permissive air threat environment for years. The impact of not having air superiority would be dramatic for SOF and AFSOF. If the operating environment requires establishing air superiority, AFSOF, with no counterair capability to speak of, will in most cases definitely need to integrate with the CAF to achieve this effect, and to have relatively uncontested freedom of maneuver throughout its operational area.

The value of these airpower capabilities, and thus AFSOF, in IW lies with the flexibility, persistence, and often less intrusive force footprint they can provide the joint force. In direct actions, IW targets will not likely present static targets or discernable fronts to mass against. This will require flexibility and mobility to maneuver to engage these targets and the persistence to be in a position to enable this flexibility. Taking advantage of range and speed, airpower can base from locations with less of an impact on

⁶⁶ AFDD 2-3, 5.

the *relevant population*, or near this populace with a relatively smaller scale of force than other military components. This can obviate enemy propaganda efforts and help work positively towards IW's *struggle for legitimacy and influence* over the relevant populations.

Implications for Operation Art

The operational art involved in planning future operations will likely see this increased integration of SOF into its campaign design more consistently than ever before in history. Regarding SOF, GPF, and the element of operational design *synergy*, JP 3-0 states:

The synergy achieved by integrating and synchronizing the actions of conventional and special operations forces and capabilities in joint operations and in multiple domains enables JFCs to maximize available capabilities and minimize potential seams or vulnerabilities.”⁶⁷

At the tactical level this is fairly obvious, though the state of AFSOF's joint integration training doesn't represent its acknowledgement, and creates a point of failure for all operational efforts at the tactical level. As an example, the ability for SOF and AFSOF alone to make a forcible entry into a medium to high threat environment, and sustain against superior numbers, all point to more capability than SOF or AFSOF typically bring to the table on their own.

Where it may not be as obvious is at the operational and strategic levels. The historical nature and manner of SOF missions have often led to isolation and deconfliction in planning, versus full integration. A key operational level planning hurdle is the understanding that SOF may be tasked to accomplish operational or strategic objectives with small force size. As a result, the relatively small force size can't be

⁶⁷ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. *JP 3-0, Joint Operations*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. 17 September (2006), IV-18.

allowed to make them an afterthought in planning. Ensuring integration, synergy, and proper preparatory and supporting actions, requires early inclusion in planning.⁶⁸

Has the integration and synergy discussed in JP 3-0 been exercised enough to ensure both GPF and SOF can maximize this synergy? JP 3-0 states, “The synergy of the joint force depends in large part on a shared understanding of the operational environment.”⁶⁹ An example of this shared understanding and integrating SOF at the operational level was seen in the lines of operation planned for OIF. As shown in Figure 5, the SOF line of operation was critical to the overall plan, utilized to impact, or create effects, on all but one of the adversary’s ten critical capabilities. Looking at the scale of integration of SOF, and therefore AFSOF, into the operational plan, one must ask if this was, is, or needs to be trained or exercised. As the current and future operating environment indicates, OIF will not likely be the last opportunity for this scale of SOF and AFSOF integration into operational planning.

While the design element synergy will encompass more SOF and GPF integration, so too will *leverage*. The asymmetric advantages SOF and AFSOF provide the joint force, notably by airpower, means the operational artist looking to build leverage into their plan will look to include SOF and AFSOF capabilities, now more than ever.

As operational artists include SOF into their plans, one simple SOF limitation will be a common theme when assessing the plan’s *balance*, and will drive more SOF and GPF integration. This theme is the HD/LD nature of SOF forces, ground or air. While the effects SOF produces won’t likely diminish, their employment will have to be

⁶⁸ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. *JP 3-05.1, Joint Special Operations Task Force Operations*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office (26 April 2007), xiii.

⁶⁹ JP 3-0, IV-18.

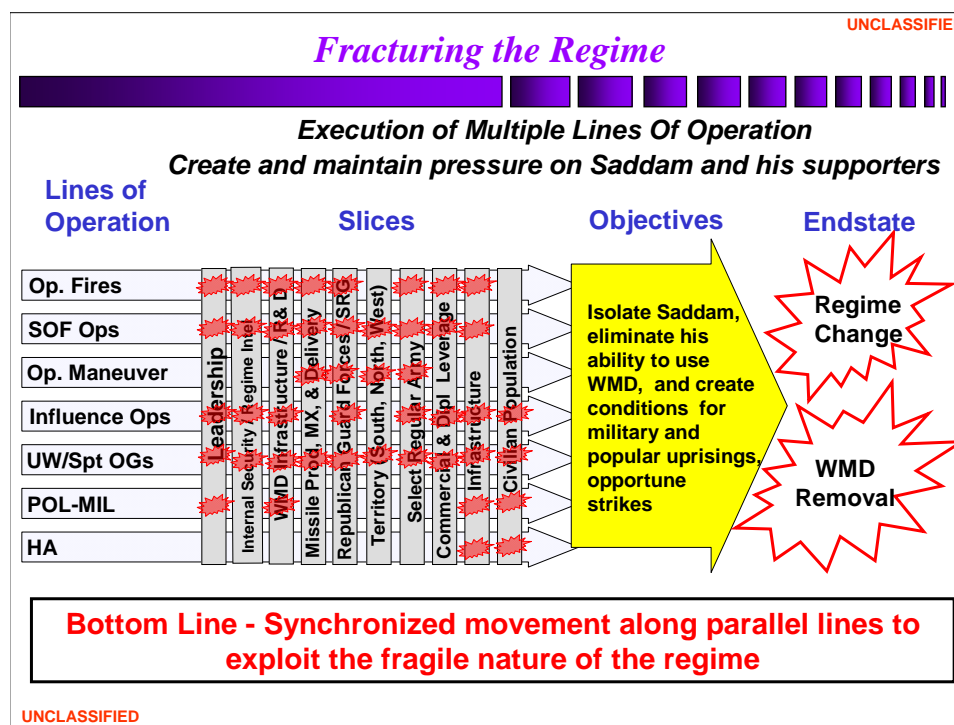


Figure 5. OIF Lines of Operation.⁷⁰

weighed and prioritized against availability across all missions. As a result, more GPF may integrate with SOF to force multiply their numbers or capabilities. Likewise, the risk of inaction due to SOF availability may mean GPF are tasked to achieve SOF-like effects. Regardless, this is a critical element that must be understood and should be trained to.

A large part of how any force understands the operational environment is based on how it employs within it, and hence how they see it impacting their employment. Understanding these differences and how to best integrate with each other is best accomplished prior to crisis initiation. This understanding helps facilitate a unity of effort, as each player sees how they fit into the overall plan. This will particularly be important in GWOT's globally distributed IW scenarios. As IW in GWOT will

⁷⁰ Fitzgerald, Michael. "Working with Planners: Strategic Planning Lessons Learned." Presentation to Joint Advanced Warfighting School, Norfolk, Va (1 February 2008).

obviously require a comprehensive and multifaceted DOD approach, the different military components will be tasked to jointly operate in an often ambiguous environment. Succeeding in this environment will require unity of effort and action. Understanding the other joint partners' capabilities is vital to this unity.

Whether supporting a larger GPF effort or being supported in a lead role, SOF and GPF will require synchronized and deconflicted planning and execution. Are joint task force (JTF) headquarters prepared to properly plan and then command and control with heavy SOF's involvement? True, the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) functional component is an established part of the typical JTF construct, but is its integration maximized, particularly in light of likely future operations? Likewise, are JSOTFs prepared to fully capitalize on capabilities GPF provides and integrate them into their plans? Finally, during execution, are both ready to best command and control this joint integration on a large scale?

USSOCOM has taken substantive action to insure the synchronization of GWOT DOD efforts at a global or strategic level, but does this translate to the operational level in integrated joint operations in the operating environment?⁷¹ The onus still likely falls to a joint force or geographic commander, far separated from SOCOM, their staff, and the relevant SOF staffs, to ensure the necessary SOF and GPF integration exists. Plans at the strategic and operation level can be synchronized, but execution could still be deconflicted and not integrated due to lacking integration capability at the operational or tactical level.

⁷¹ USSOCOM has taken a number of steps to synchronize DOD GWOT efforts. Of note they have created a Center for Special Operations (CSO) for this purpose and also established a joint interagency task force to integrate interagency planning.

These questions point at a SOF and GPF command and control history that doesn't necessarily have a spotless record. The environments where SOF is predominantly employed can create command relationships that are different from what is regularly trained to. The scale and force structure may not follow the norm. To quote AFDD 2-3 regarding this issue:

In irregular operations, commanders should understand that the application of military force is in support of other instruments of national power, and that traditional joint force organizational relationships may not be as effective for irregular operational environments.⁷²

In OEF-Philippines, JTF-510, later JSOTF-P, provides an example of a JTF command far different from what may be experienced by personnel only exposed to CENTCOM operations. There was never a need for a huge CAOC or similar organizational infrastructure. Though JTF-510 was primarily SOF manned, it did rely heavily on GPF ground and air forces. As GWOT operations expand, it is conceivable to have multiple SOF-centric and SOF-led JTFs operating in one COCOM or globally. Aside from the fact that GPF would be needed for capability beyond that inherent to SOF, it will again highlight the HD/LD aspect of SOF and the need for joint integration. The familiarity and understanding for these situations, particularly if involving combat operations, are things best initially gained in training.

Strategic Document Capability Guidance

Across the ROMO, the scale and difficulty of the missions will require unified action, persistence, flexibility, synergy, and unity of effort during joint operations involving multi-dimensional direct and indirect approaches. The QDR provides strategic guidance towards these capabilities in the following “fundamental imperative”:

⁷² AFDD 2-3, 58.

“Continuing to reorient the Department’s capabilities and forces to be more agile in this time of war, to prepare for wider asymmetric challenges and to hedge against uncertainty over the next 20 years.”⁷³ This imperative specifically points at the capability needed to counter threats in IW and conventional war, as “asymmetric challenges” relates to IW and the “hedge against uncertainty” relates to growing near peer threats and potential regional conflict.

The NSS, NDS, and QDR all provide additional strategic guidance regarding basic force capability requirements for the operating environment. Matching the future threat to capability needs, the NSS states that the DOD is balancing its capabilities across the four challenges - traditional, irregular, catastrophic, and disruptive, as set forth in the NDS. As a further baseline for required capabilities, the NMS defines three strategic principles to guide development of joint operating concepts for force employment in the future operating environment - agility, decisiveness, and integration.⁷⁴ Key to these principles is the ability to deal with uncertainty and force multiple by integrating all elements of national power. Inherent in this integration is the ability to do it within the DOD, before demanding it elsewhere. The NMS drives home the need for integration when it describes the desired joint force attributes, “Defeating adaptive adversaries requires flexible, modular and deployable joint forces with the ability to combine the strengths of individual Services, combatant commands, other government agencies and multinational partners.”⁷⁵

⁷³ QDR, 1.

⁷⁴ NMS, 7.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 15.

The integration imperative is also evidenced by NATO's strategic commanders in NATO's *Strategic Vision: The Military Challenge*. Discussing the operational level challenges, they report:

The planning and execution of operations will be an increasingly joint and multilateral effort requiring truly interoperable forces. To support this end, the use of Alliance forces must change from a pattern of deconfliction to one of integration where emerging technologies and concepts, like the network-enabled capability, are increasingly used to improve the competitive advantage of the Alliance.⁷⁶

While this quote hits largely on technical interoperability issues, its true value is how it depicts planning and operations to be joint, needing integration vice deconfliction.

The QDR adds to, and champions, the integration theme. The QDR's Chairman's Assessment made the following comment regarding joint warfare and integration, "Integrating advanced capabilities to improve joint warfighting is at the heart of the QDR effort."⁷⁷ This concept is further supported by the desired joint force attributes listed in the NMS, of which "fully integrated" is the first listed.⁷⁸ Finally, according to the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCJO), the "exceptional ability to integrate" is one of the key baseline assumptions in its description of how joint forces are expected operate across the future ROMO.⁷⁹

The claims of this chapter that the operating environment calls for more AFSOF involvement, and enhanced integration, will be further explored in separate cases in chapter 4. First it is important to gain a more detailed understanding of AFSOF's roles and missions, particularly with the new found insight into the operating environment

⁷⁶ Jones, J. and E. Giambastiani. "Strategic Vision: The Military Challenge." NATO publication by NATO's strategic commanders (August 2004), iii.

⁷⁷ NMS, A-5.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁷⁹ Department of Defense. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, Version 2.0.* Washington, D.C. (2005), 4.

they'll work within, and with a general idea of the types of missions they'll be asked to accomplish.

3. AFSOF ROLES AND MISSIONS

AFSOF's evolution from the conventional Air Force did not just start eighteen years ago with the standup of AFSOC. Well prior to AFSOC's standup in 1990, airpower was utilized to conduct special operations missions in support of large conventional operations and small covert actions. Truly the beginnings of AFSOF didn't come from small isolated covert missions, but instead during some of the highest intensity conventional warfare the world has yet witnessed, in the French campaign and Operation WARLORD during World War II. Prior to and after D-Day, the CARPETBAGGER Project used modified B-24 and B-17 bombers to conduct thousands of clandestine infiltration and re-supply missions to enable the OSS and French resistance in their asymmetric actions against the Germans.⁸⁰ These special missions were vital to the strategic and operational planning conducted for the campaign. From German occupied France, to the jungles of Burma, and to the Son Tay Raid in Vietnam, AFSOF have remained part of strategic, operational, and tactical level planning and execution. The capabilities and limitations of today's AFSOF make their proper integration more important than ever.

Prior to the standup of AFSOC in 1990, AFSOF's existence was generally ad hoc, with limited dedicated special operations training institutions and without large scale support for formal recognition as a separate entity within the Air Force. Historically, AFSOF was developed from standing conventional forces to fulfill a current need and then was neglected post conflict.⁸¹ The deficiencies of SOF and AFSOF were highlighted

⁸⁰ Bernard Moore, "The Secret Air War Over France" USAAF Special Operations Units in the French Campaign of 1944". SAASS master's thesis, Air University (May 1992), 2.

⁸¹ In 1986 the Nunn-Cohen Act was passed, leading the way for the establishment of USSOCOM, an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict [ASD (SO/LIC)], and a

in 1980 by the unfortunate failure of the Desert One hostage rescue attempt in Iran.

Today, AFSOC is the USAF air component of USSOCOM and has a codified standing infrastructure and formal organizational functions that the Carpetbaggers would've only dreamed of. Their mission sets and users, however, were eerily similar to those supported by today's MC-130s, MH-53s, CV-22s, EC-130Es, AC-130s, and U-28s.

While understanding the history of AFSOF provides important perspective to AFSOF's strategic and operational role in conventional and unconventional operations, more pertinent to this paper are their current characteristics and capabilities as they relate to those roles today and joint force integration.

Though doctrinally and legally designated as a SOF force, what really makes AFSOF part of SOF? The majority of AFSOF's missions are in support of ground SOF units and their missions. As such, many of the same mission characterizations which apply to ground SOF are also applicable to AFSOF. An important understanding of the nature of AFSOF missions comes directly from the doctrinal definition of special operations:

Operations conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional force requirement. These operations often require covert, clandestine, or low visibility capabilities. Special operations are applicable across the range of military operations. They can be conducted independently or in conjunction with operations of conventional forces or other government agencies and may include operations through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces. Special operations differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets.⁸²

new Major Force Program (MFP-11) for SOF. AFSOC was established 22 May, 1990. Source: USSOCOM Fact Sheet 2007.

⁸² JP 1-02, 502.

The challenges found in this definition help point to the need for integration. As AFSOF employ towards strategic and operational objectives associated with the DIME elements, the operating environment and threats will often exceed AFSOF's sole capabilities. As such, the "physical and political risk" demands ways to reduce it and help achieve success.

While AFSOF aircrews do undergo specialized training, employ distinctive tactics, and have some aircraft capabilities unique from the CAF, none are too far beyond the scope of other Air Force assets or non-AFSOF crew capability. What then truly makes AFSOF crews part of SOF is their relational proximity to special operations missions, their training, and how they are used to support SOF's core tasks. Their diversification and flexibility they provide help make them "special" for SOF, not because of their "specialized" equipment. AFSOF fulfills the core tasks by conducting the following core missions: Air to Surface Interface, Agile Combat Support, Combat Aviation Advisory Operations, Information Operations, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance, Personnel Recovery, Precision Fires, Psychological Operations Dissemination, Specialized Air Mobility, and Specialized Refueling.⁸³

As AFSOF are integrated into planning, and conduct their missions to enable SOF's core tasks, it is crucial to understand their capabilities and limitations as they have a direct impact on the need for joint integration. While AFSOF can execute its roles alone, they will face situations where the scale of the desired effects and/or the threat they face will require a joint effort. The joint effort referred to here goes beyond the common

⁸³ Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force. AFDD 2-7, *Special Operations*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office (16 December 2005), 10. Additional detail regarding what each of the AFSOF core missions entail can be found in AFDD 2-7.

understanding of SOF being “inherently joint”.⁸⁴ Simply because most of AFSOF’s special operations customers are non Air Force, obviously most operations are joint. Also, of course, USSOCOM is a multi-service command, which also leads to this common and also correct understanding of inherent jointed-ness. In the context of this thesis, the need for a joint effort extends to capabilities or capacity outside of SOF.

Operational security and SOF command and control (C2) are two of the most prominent historical limitations or hurdles to joint integration for AFSOF. Due to the risks involved, the secrecy and isolation surrounding AFSOF missions are often necessary. Of course the level of security depends on the mission and, obviously, not all AFSOF missions are related to sensitive strategic or operational objectives. However, if secrecy is misapplied, it can lead to a paradigm where AFSOF and some GPF forces assume they shouldn’t interact. This false perceptual barrier is a dilemma for joint planning. A presumption that including GPF into AFSOF planning will lead to an operations security violation or “highlight” the SOF force, is damaging to the integration imperative. Poor operations security or tactical planning in any designated force can lead to mission compromise. Presumably, non-AFSOF personnel can maintain secrecy as well as AFSOF personnel, and good tactical planning can integrate conventional assets with AFSOF without endangering their mission, in the future this will be paramount.

Similar perceptual barriers often exist regarding the unique command relationships for SOF and AFSOF. SOF are typically OPCON to the Theater Special Operations Component (TSOC) or JSOTF, with air planning and execution carried out by

⁸⁴ AFDD 2-7, 1. AFDD 2-7 makes reference to SOF being inherently joint.

the Joint Special Operations Air Component (JSOAC).⁸⁵ AFSOF are physically represented to the conventional air component via the Special Operation Liaison Element (SOLE), which coordinates, synchronizes, and integrates SOF operations.⁸⁶ This separation between SOF air and conventional air makes the liaison effort critical to effective integration. While current operations have dramatically improved the status of these security and C2 hurdles, more training is necessary to improve interaction.

AFSOF's strengths in the future operating environment come from their unique and versatile capabilities to support SOF's core tasks. No other air component can perform the same SOF tailored missions, and in the same operating environment, as well as AFSOF can. AFSOF has extensively modified rotary and fixed wing aircraft dedicated to SOF infiltration, exfiltration, and re-supply, all with defensive capabilities better than other conventional lift platforms. AFSOF has the only fixed wing gunships. AFSOF has the only Air Force unit trained and dedicated to FID. Finally, AFSOF has the most exposure and background in IW.

These strengths and capabilities are not a windfall. AFSOF's increased relevance will highlight its limitations against emerging threat scenarios and, perhaps more glaringly, in light of their limited numbers and LD/HD operations tempo. Despite their capabilities, its aircrafts' defensive capabilities are nevertheless limited against the emerging threats and their numbers are few.⁸⁷ To enable AFSOF against future threats

⁸⁵ OPCODE, or operational control is the command authority that may be exercised by commanders at any echelon below at or below the level of combatant command and may be delegated within the command. It includes authoritative direction over all aspect of military operations and joint training necessary to accomplish missions assigned to the command (JP-1).

⁸⁶ JP 3-05.1, III-13.

⁸⁷ Additional information regarding specific unclassified AFSOF capabilities and force size is available in the Joint Special Operations University's *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual* (June 2005 (revised)).

and force multiply their numbers, they must continue to improve joint integration capability.

USSOCOM's 2007 Posture Statement summarized the LD/HD situation:

SOF are a high-demand force in the GWOT and are deployed globally in support of each GCC's (Geographic Combatant Commander) specific needs. However, over 85 percent of SOF deployments were to Central Command's area of responsibility in 2006, leaving few special operators to pursue long-term operations in other areas of the world. Ultimately, we must be victorious in Afghanistan and Iraq to defeat global terrorism, but the long term GWOT will not be won in these two conflicts. To fully engage in the increased responsibilities of SOF in GWOT, growth in the force and its capabilities is required.⁸⁸

While the QDR has directed an increase in SOF force size, it takes time to build a force with the uncompromising skills and capabilities required in SOF. One of the *SOF Truths* states, "Special operations forces cannot be mass produced."⁸⁹ This is true for the skill levels required, and for AFSOF it is also a budgetary fact of life. More assets are required to accommodate the increase in the special operations ground force. AFSOC has recently cited the need for additional personnel and aircraft.⁹⁰ Recently AFSOC added a new SOF dedicated unmanned aerial vehicle squadron, the 3rd SOS, with 6 aircraft. Despite this progress, USSOCOM suggested they could use "dozens more".⁹¹ To further describe the LD/HD issue, AFSOC has expressed concern their aircraft are utilized at such high rate that they are not available for training.⁹²

There is no solace for the HD/LD issue when examined against USSOCOM's future strategic objectives to meet the command's responsibilities. Two of these

⁸⁸ USSOCOM Posture Statement, 11.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1.

⁹⁰ Feickert, Andrew. "U.S. Special Operations Forces: Background and Issues for Congress." CRS report for Congress (25 January 2008), 3.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

objectives are *global presence* and *global expeditionary force*. Defining these objectives, *global presence* is establishing a worldwide persistent joint SOF presence to shape operational environments. *Global Expeditionary Force* is providing quick reaction; mission-focused, task organized joint SOF teams. It isn't difficult to look at these objectives, read between the lines, and see no let-down in SOF operations tempo. While AFSOF's force structure is increased, it will take time and will still not likely meet the future demand.

Examining AFSOF's roles and missions obviously adds another block onto the argument for joint integration and its associated training. Looking at specific case examples of how these roles require help from outside the command will further demonstrate it.

4. INTEGRATION TRAINING IMPERATIVE ANALYSIS

While a variety of variables, already described, highlight the joint integration imperative, two general case study areas particularly make the point clear. An examination of the following: past and potentially future *conventional conflict* and *IW* scenarios enforce the increasing necessity of AFSOF integration with joint partners in operational and tactical planning and execution. Narrowing the cases to the conventional conflict and IW categories easily accounts for the four challenge areas from the National Defense Strategy (traditional, irregular, catastrophic, and disruptive), and acts as a foundation or template for future AFSOF integration needs. Looking at each of these scenarios, it is important to contemplate how much training related to each is currently ongoing.

Conventional Conflict

As discussed, the synergistic effects and asymmetric advantages SOF delivers make their participation in future conflict inevitable. Related to conventional conflict, it is important to make two points up front. First, if a conflict is largely characterized by actions carried out by GPF or by traditional forms of warfare, it does not mean that SOF will not have a significant role. SOF's recent large role in OIF and, as far back as WWII, with its Office of Strategic Services (OSS) history in Operation OVERLORD makes this clear. The range of SOF missions in high-intensity conventional conflict, to name of only a few, could easily include raids against high value targets, establishing a separate UW front, assisting with training indigenous forces during stability and reconstruction efforts, or providing special reconnaissance throughout the operating environment. AFSOF would still be required as a key enabler for all these missions.

Second, conventional conflict can easily involve enemy threat capabilities or a mission scale that exceeds the ability of SOF and AFSOF. Even when SOF is operating in the peripheries, large scale conflict against nation states may require GPF integration to mitigate the risk for access or survival. Beyond the obvious military capabilities of many of America's stated adversaries, the proliferation of advanced weaponry to countless less familiar countries in the arc of instability makes this clear. African nations, whose air forces exist in obscurity, still have new Russian built fighters and surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems, all impediments to air superiority.⁹³ Unfortunately, AFSOF aircraft are not designed to operate in high threat environments.⁹⁴ A point often lost on those forces with capabilities spanning the threat spectrum, the level of threat risk is relative to one's capabilities against it. Where small arms, anti-aircraft artillery, and man portable SAMs, may be of lesser consequence to high fast flying aircraft, these typically "low-threat" systems could be employed in a manner making it high risk for AFSOF platforms.

In OIF, SOF integrated GPF ground and air units into their plans in Northern Iraq, due to the scale or number of forces involved. Infiltrating these forces, in any reasonable time period, without conventional air's C-17s would've taken more AFSOF aircraft than are in total existence.⁹⁵ Additionally, the amount of firepower needed to support SOF, and the Kurdish Pershmerga fighting with them, exceeded the capabilities of AFSOF AC-

⁹³ Multiple unclassified references for this statement exist. Additional detail on the proliferation of weapons can be found at <http://www.globalsecurity.org> or <http://www8.janes.com>.

⁹⁴ For more information on AFSOF capabilities in threat environments, readers can reference classified and unclassified Air Force Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (AFTTP) volumes for each of AFSOF's assets.

⁹⁵ This assertion is made based on the size of the 173rd Airborne Brigade jump made from multiple C-17s and the amount of supporting personnel and equipment delivered for these GPF assets. AFSOF MC-130s were globally conducting missions in OIF, OEF, and elsewhere. According to the Joint Special Operations University Special Operations Forces Reference Manual, June 2005, there are only 58 MC-130s (20 MC-130H, 24 MC-130P, and 14 MC-130E) in the total inventory. MC-130s, the largest AFSOF lift asset can not carry near as much cargo or personnel as the C-17.

130s in scale and weapons capabilities. These two points described above are evidenced in the following conventional conflict examples.

SOF actions during the opening days of OIF in 2003 demonstrated their utility in a largely conventional operation. In true economy of force operations, SOF were vital to seizing oil fields and distribution points in Southern Iraq, supporting the air component suppress the SCUD threat in the west, and, as the supported force, fixing thirteen Iraqi divisions in the north along the “Green Line” boundary between Iraq and the Kurdish Autonomous Zone (KAZ).⁹⁶ During all these actions, AFSOF was an important enabler, infiltrating, exfiltrating, re-supplying, and providing close air support to the ground SOF. In each of these fronts there were multiple examples of effective tactical ground SOF integration with GPF. Tactical integration with AFSOF was not non-existent. AC-130s frequently supported GPF ground units, and MH-53s were supported by conventional air assets during the seizure of oil terminals in the south. However, one example of limited integration at the start of JSOTF-N operations could’ve proven catastrophic and points to a need for improvement in joint AFSOF and GPF warfighting. This example involves the 22 March 2003, AFSOF infiltration of 10th Special Forces Group (SFG) teams into JSOTF-N’s Joint Special Operations Area (JSOA) to conduct UW with the indigenous Peshmerga.⁹⁷ Particularly daunting, JSOTF-N was tasked to fix thirteen Iraqi divisions (over 100,000 enemy soldiers) along the Green Line in order to prevent them from moving south against the main coalition advance.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ There are multiple unclassified and classified accounts of these operations. The overarching planning theme for these roles were covered in a presentation by Mr. Fitzgerald’s, “Working with Planners: Strategic Planning Lessons Learned” presentation.

⁹⁷ Robert Jones, Jr, “Getting There is Half the Battle: Operation UGLY BABY.” *Veritas*, Journal of Army Special Operations History, PB 31-05-1 (winter 2005), 10.

⁹⁸ Hastings, Michael, “The Integration of Conventional Forces and Special Operations Forces”, SAMS master’s thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (June 2005), 67.

Towards this *end*, six MC-130H aircraft were tasked as the *ways* to infiltrate nineteen Operational Detachments A (ODA) and four Operational Detachment B (ODB) to advanced operating bases at Bashur and As Sulaymaniyah airfields.⁹⁹ With the denial of the 4th Infantry Division's entrance to Iraq from Turkey, it made the role of SOF's JSOTF-N mission that much more paramount. After being denied use of Turkish airspace, the mission was forced to launch from within theater and execute a daring long-range nighttime circuitous route, ingressing at low altitude and egressing back out of Iraq at high altitude.¹⁰⁰ While the Iraqi air defenses had been substantially degraded over the years of Operations NORTHERN WATCH and SOUTHERN WATCH, the presence of small arms, anti-aircraft artillery, tactical SAMS, and search radar systems, made the mission risky for the large MC-130s. Unfortunately, without a large dedicated effort, there is still little today our modern Air Force can do to completely eradicate these non-high profile and more elusive types of threats. The Iraqis could still present an integrated air defense system formidable enough to significantly threaten AFSOF type aircraft. This was more so the case as the mission received no CAF air support to preemptively or reactively suppress the threats they faced.¹⁰¹ Wasn't the operational objective of JSOTF-N worthy of the level of support effort to ensure its success? What would be the operational or strategic impact if the force the Kurds were promised was destroyed, with large American casualties as a result? During the course of the ingress and egress, all aircraft were targeted multiple times, with three aircraft receiving battle damage, one

⁹⁹ Jones, 14.

¹⁰⁰ Jones, 10. Additional background material for this mission is pulled from the author's own research, conducted for AFSOC in 2005, for a classified case study of the tactics involved in the mission. All information presented from that case study is unclassified. Research for the case study involved extensive interviews of involved personnel and document research.

¹⁰¹ Michael Jackson, "Ugly Baby Case Study: Mission Analysis and Lessons Learned." (S//NF) (May 2005), 4. Report conducted for AFSOC. All extractions are unclassified.

having to make an emergency divert into Turkish “closed” airspace.¹⁰² In the end, the skill and bravery of the AFSOF MC-130H crews carried the day with the successful infiltration of five of the six aircraft, and completion of the Air Force’s longest range infiltration since World War II.¹⁰³ Could conventional air support have been the *means* to reduce the risk involved? Why wasn’t there CAF support to escort or suppress the threats they faced?

Now years later, the answer to these questions will never be completely clear and it is not important to the issue. Research of the mission shows confusion on both the CAF and AFSOF sides about the mission’s support requirements.¹⁰⁴ Some involved AFSOF planners and aircrew described a lack of CAF support availability.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, some AFSOF planners, assigned the task of coordinating the suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD), expressed a lack of training for their planning and coordinating tasks.¹⁰⁶ Ultimately, AFSOF and CAF integration did not effectively go beyond AFSOF target list inputs, and SOLE airspace coordination and deconfliction, in the Combine Air Operations Center (CAOC).¹⁰⁷ Regardless, somehow the operational, and perhaps strategic, level importance of the mission was not enough to drive the recognition of a possible “weak link” in achieving JSOTF-N’s *ends*. Enabling JSOTF-N to accomplish its mission could easily have been argued to have strategic value. At the operational planner level was there a lack of familiarity with how AFSOF and GPF could integrate, or the need for integration? At the tactical level, were the AFSOF crews

¹⁰² Jones, 14.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰⁴ Jackson, 4.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid..

prepared to integrate with CAF assets in combat? How often had a SOF insertion during a conventional conflict of this size and magnitude been trained to?

These questions could easily be relevant again in future conventional conflicts. A quick canvassing of the environment reveals a true potential for regional crises across the arc of instability from the present to 2025.¹⁰⁸ AFSOF will again be an enabler, part of the *ways and means*, for an opposed SOF infiltration in the early stages of a high intensity conflict or, for that matter, a low intensity conflict with threats still significant to AFSOF's success. Stated potential enemies like Iran and Syria haven't had years of air defense degradation like Iraq. As, UW campaigns take time to inculcate, will AFSOF have the luxury of waiting until the risk is completely mitigated before they can fulfill their enabler role for SOF? Will strategic options involving AFSOF in a rapidly deteriorating failed state scenario be off the table due to the threat? They don't necessarily have to, if AFSOF's capability shortfalls are mitigated by tactical integration with conventional assets and operational planning efforts to help ensure AFSOF's success.

Irregular Warfare

The increased prevalence of IW in the strategic environment, and the established relevancy of SOF in this IW arena, makes this category an important example of the AFSOF and GPF integration imperative. As previously addressed, America's strategy will be characterized by more indirect engagement to increase partner nation legitimacy and capability against violent extremism and terrorist networks, thus preempting future attacks. As efforts increase along these lines, so too will the likely demand for SOF IW

¹⁰⁸ United States Army. "The Changing Operation Environment, Future Instability and Conflict", Presentation created by United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (Jul 2007).

activities, particularly FID related actions to build partner capacity, COIN, and UW actions to counter violent extremism in contested areas. Accordingly, there is already an impetus in strategic guidance documents and service doctrine to increase GPF participation in these operations. Current conceptualization within the Pentagon sees the future of IW in terms of three campaigns, all involving GPF and SOF.¹⁰⁹ According to Kalev Sepp, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for special operations capabilities, the first of these campaigns is a steady-state campaign, the second is a surge to support large scale COIN, and the last is a surge to support UW. Furthermore, regarding this concept, Sepp stated, “The key will be combining general-purpose forces, special operations forces, and civilian U.S. departments and agencies.”¹¹⁰

Indicative of the IW emphasis, the USAF has already published a new, non-AFSOF specific, IW doctrine document (AFDD 2-3, Irregular Warfare) and established the Air Force Coalition and Irregular Warfare Center for Excellence (CIWC), as the USAF focal point for IW efforts and building partner nation capacity in GWOT.¹¹¹ Despite the much needed new doctrinal discussions and policy momentum, it is necessary to recognize one point up front for this case area. There is only one Air Force command with a recent and established background in IW, AFSOC. Within this command, there is only one squadron dedicated to FID, the 6th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) with its Combat Aviation Advisory (CAA) mission.¹¹² This means nearly seven years after 9/11 the U.S. military has roughly 110 regionally oriented aviation advisors for the entire

¹⁰⁹ Fawzia Sheikh, “Pentagon Sees Irregular Warfare Evolving Into Three Campaigns”, *Inside the Pentagon* (February 21, 2008), 1.

¹¹⁰ Ibid..

¹¹¹ Bill Montgomery, “USAF Irregular Warfare Concept.” Air Force Special Operations Command White Paper (May 2007), 18.

¹¹² Ibid., 7.

world.¹¹³ While there is a movement to increase this force size, it will take time. Beyond the 6th SOS CAA unit, absolutely vital to FID and IW, the remainders of AFSOF's units, also vital to IW operations, are still limited in size. Two of USSOCOM's SOF truths that unfortunately correctly apply here are "Special operations forces cannot be mass produced" and "Competent special operations forces cannot be created after emergencies occur".¹¹⁴

The global increase in FID demand by combatant commands may quickly exceed the HD/LD capacity of AFSOF, the primary air component player in FID. Key to this claim is not just the number of candidate FID nations, but the range and scope of activities encompassed in FID. FID activities and their relative spectrum from peacetime operations to war are diverse. For AFSOF, FID, COIN, and UW obviously translate to more than only CAA, but to all of its mission areas supporting SOF's core tasks.



Figure 6. FID Activities¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Montgomery, 7.

¹¹⁴ USSOCOM Posture Statement, 1.

¹¹⁵ AFDD 2-3.1, 5.

Highlighting the FID component of IW alone is almost enough to make the case for AFSOF and GPF integration. Doctrine defines FID as the following, “FID is participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.”¹¹⁶ Discussing FID operations does not simply refer to training and advising foreign militaries. FID includes three categories, indirect support, direct support not involving combat, and combat operations.¹¹⁷ AFSOF’s involvement in each of these areas can be much more involved and complex than the common misperception that they only include the conduct of training.

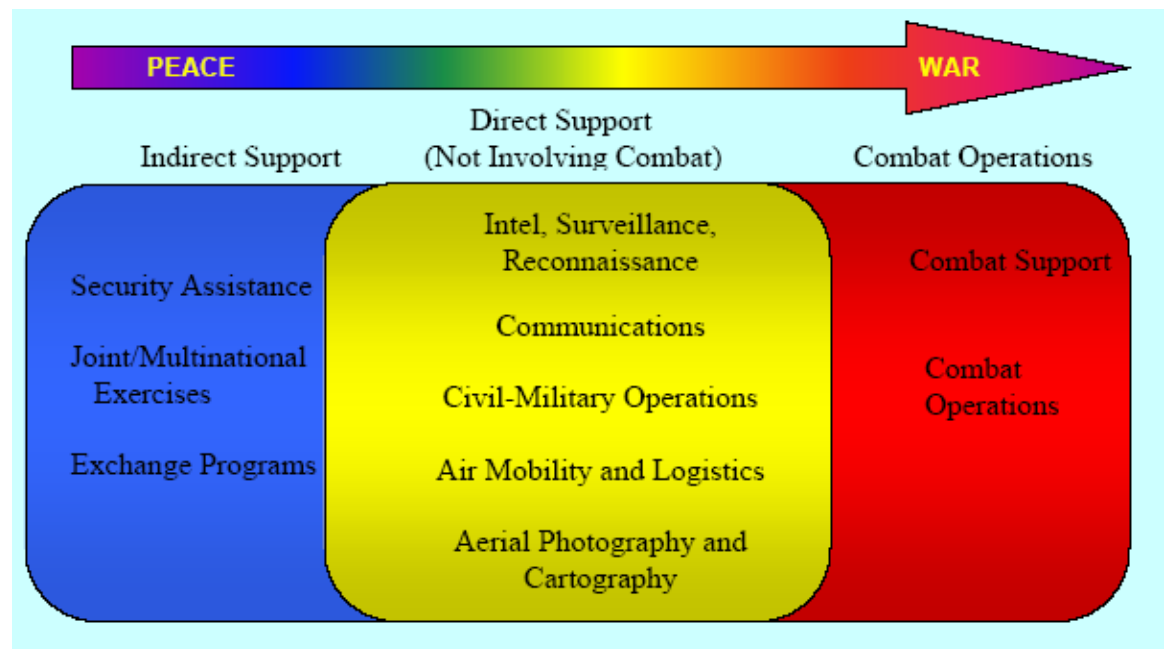


Figure 7. The Spectrum of Air Force FID¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ JP 1-02, 108.

¹¹⁷ AFDD 2-3.1, 24.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 25.

Combatant Commanders can continue to conduct FID and other activities to build partner capacity (BPC) as part of their Theater Security Cooperation Plans (TSCP) at a limited and iterative pace with only a few priority countries. However, the future operating environment's demands will likely see an increase in these efforts.

Highlighting this potential, a recent RAND study examined the future demand for aviation advisory missions and concluded that the U.S. has some level of security assistance relationship with approximately eighty percent of the world's thirty-two states beset by insurgencies related to militant Islamism.¹¹⁹ This number equates to twenty-eight countries where FID operations could reasonably be expected. The potential for more involved IW operations within this set of twenty-eight is particularly more likely once operations in OIF and OEF have diminished and more forces are available for tasking.

AFSOF's support to FID efforts, or its own unilateral CAA missions, is not succinct by nature. Particularly in the realm of building foreign aviation capabilities, the advisory process is slow and complex as the technical and training aspects demand. This requires a persistent presence, which means a single unit cannot be engaged everywhere at once. This persistent presence in a training location directly relates to the dilemma of too few forces tied down in too few locations. RAND concluded the following regarding training events associated with the future FID mission requirement, "Experience and deployment data suggest, however, that roughly three visits annually are generally required to build more-sophisticated capabilities and to have lasting effects. At present, the limited MTT (mobile training team) capacity of the U.S. armed forces makes it

¹¹⁹ Vick, A. et al. "Airpower in the New Counterinsurgency Era: The Strategic Importance of USAF Advisory and Assistance Missions." RAND report prepared for the USAF (2006), 129.

impossible to interact at this high level with the large number of potential partners.”¹²⁰ To add context, America’s best suited FID practitioners, Army SF, have seventy-five percent of their capacity focused on Iraq and Afghanistan.¹²¹ This doesn’t leave much for what is clearly a problem extending beyond just two countries. Moreover, consider the fact that where SF goes, so does AFSOF, and a stark picture is painted about the availability of AFSOF on a globally persistent basis.

Statistics from the USAF’s only CAA unit adds weight to this problem. It is estimated 58 percent of received requests for their forces have been turned down, due to a lack of manpower.¹²² To concurrently and efficiently run multiple new FID operations around the world, will likely require a larger AFSOF force structure or a greater usage of GPF to augment or support this role. Unfortunately, the enabling effects airpower brings to FID, COIN, and UW, are often overlooked versus sexy ground force direct action capabilities. They are also often neglected due to the price tag associated with some foreign countries actually gaining and sustaining a viable and worthwhile air component. The 6 SOS Director of Strategy summarized the implication:

A principal reason many of our partner nations cannot effectively deal with terrorism and guerilla insurgency is precisely because they only possess ground-based militaries and because they have little, or nothing, to offer in the way of airpower to find, fix, and finish critical terrorist and guerilla targets.¹²³

To compete with this demand, AFSOC has recommended the creation of an entire AFSOC wing dedicated to IW. As of yet nonexistent, will this be enough to satisfy the

¹²⁰ Vick, 96. This RAND report uses the MTT label widely to refer to all aspects of TSCP interaction with partner nations.

¹²¹ Robert Martinage, “The Global War on Terrorism: An Assessment.” Report for the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment (2008), 242.

¹²² Vick, 125.

¹²³ Montgomery, 8.

need? Current operations in Iraq reveal the training scale dilemma and future potential involved with regional conflicts. While the 6 SOS has been engaged in FID operations there for years, conventional AF units are now heavily involved training the Iraqi Air Force. The Coalition Air Force Transition Team (CAFTT), responsible for building the Iraqi air force, is primarily staffed from GPF.¹²⁴ While the Iraq example could be called extreme, because after the total defeat of a nation state in conventional conflict the entire air force needed ground-up rebuilding, it is indicative of the potential CAA and FID scale. Furthermore, CAFTT's efforts didn't start to deliver effects until two years after the defeat of Iraq.¹²⁵ There was no standing prepared and exercised force. The QDR force planning construct specifically addresses the requirement to simultaneously engage in one major conventional conflict and one major IW conflict, with a significant stability and reconstruction effort involved.¹²⁶ Who is to say then that each of these wouldn't heavily require AFSOF IW efforts?

The point here is that AFSOF may not be able to meet its FID obligations alone. This paper however is not arguing that FID becomes a common place event for GPF units, replacing AFSOF's role. When viewing FID as part of IW, it is clear there are factors other than the scale of the operation which may make SOF a clearly better choice than GPF. FID may be meshed with larger COIN efforts and activities that require skill unique to SOF. The same argument has been made regarding the use of Army SOF vs GPF for FID:

Specifically, certain FID efforts require a mature, experienced force made up of carefully selected personnel, skilled in cross-cultural communication

¹²⁴ Robert Allardice and Kyle Head, "The Coalition Air Force Transition Team, Rebuilding Iraq's Air Force." *Air & Space Power Journal*, (Winter 2007), 6.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ QDR, 39.

and able to operate at great distances from their operational bases, who understand the political context of their environment and who can assume a higher-than-normal degree of political risk. Those requirements characterize ARSOF (Army SOF).¹²⁷

Not all operating environments will be the same. The IW landscape may have a negative reaction to how GPF typically interacts with it. IW has a uniquely political aspect as the contestants are vying for legitimacy from the “relevant populace”. It is very likely FID forces will need to go beyond training in a static environment, but also interact with the populace, with a small signature. According to Air Force FID doctrine, “Ultimately, FID efforts are successful if they preclude the need to deploy large numbers of United States military personnel and equipment.”¹²⁸ SOF and AFSOF are clearly an attractive option towards this end. They are specifically trained for the environment and don’t carry the costly large-scale cost which GPF typically do. That said, the current AFSOC forces may not have the *means* to accomplish the desired BPC *ends*.

Clearly operations in Iraq and Afghanistan point to cases where there are definite uses for GPF and SOF combined in the FID role, including CAA. However, much of FID will require the specific skills of SOF. “FID programs may be conducted in uncertain and hostile environments. Combined with the stresses of operating in a foreign culture, this may require training that is not routinely offered to conventional forces.”¹²⁹ This doctrinal point makes the nexus of how SOF and GPF integrate towards these missions absolutely critical. The need to supplement AFSOF in certain IW roles is obviously present. Are they trained to?

¹²⁷ John Mulbury, “ARSOF, General Purpose Forces and FID: What, Where, and When?”, *Special Warfare* 21, Issue 1, no.1 (January-February 2008), 18.

¹²⁸ AFDD 2-3.1, 2.

¹²⁹ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 3-07.1, Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office (30 April 2004), IV-1.

At the risk of stating the obvious, if AFSOF and GPF are conducting FID in the same operating area, then their actions must be unified. In a non-permissive environment this requirement becomes even more important. As stated earlier, FID may involve indirect training support and combat operations. IW campaigns may have a number of lines of operation (LOO) running at once. Multiple types of kinetic and non-kinetic activities could be occurring simultaneously, thus is the nature of the IW environment. Integration in planning and understanding how AFSOF and GPF will work together along each LOO, to force multiply effects, are central towards achieving the desired unified action. Being prepared for the unique command and control structures involved, the differing TTPs, interoperability issues, capabilities, and limitations are all important. The following quote from doctrine documents the understanding:

Commanders should ensure that Air Force FID related security assistance efforts and direct support operations function as integrated elements of the overall US FID effort. Additionally, the Air Force commanders and their assigned or attached forces should be prepared to function as part of a joint-interagency team with mutually supporting programs and objectives. Clearly defined relationships among various forms of direct and indirect assistance are critical to the overall FID effort.¹³⁰

At a minimum, the command and control for large FID, UW, and COIN operations can be complex. FID doctrine highlights this complex relationship with reference to SOF:

Coordination between the theater subordinate unified SOC and the other component commands of the geographic combatant commander is essential for effective management of military operations in support of FID, including joint and multinational exercises, mobile training teams (MTTs), integration of SOF with conventional forces, and other operations.¹³¹

¹³⁰ AFDD 2-3.1, 25.

¹³¹ JP 3-07.1, II-9.

Are these complex operations trained to? The same arguments presented for FID apply across IW operations. Under the IW umbrella, it is feasible to predict operations like the UW campaign in the early stages of OEF, but with a more robust enemy threat capability. In the struggle to prevent catastrophic threats to America, it is conceivable to envision SOF and AFSOF conducting DA missions into denied areas. Even during a major conflict, history has a track record of small SOF strategic missions which required integrated planning and tactical assistance outside their inherent capabilities. During Vietnam, OPERATION Kingpin, the SOF raid on the Son Tay prison camp, saw a massive conventional effort synchronized, albeit not integrated, with the mission to allow the force's aerial ingress and egress.¹³²

To ensure success, all these potentially IW related efforts will indefinitely require some GPF integration. Just as with FID, training to plan, integrate, and command and control operations will be vital. OEF's Operation Anaconda, part of the overall UW campaign and involving SOF and GPF, has received criticism for integration problems, in particular a lack of operational and strategic level coordination involving CFACC assets.¹³³ Conventional air planners complained about late inclusion in planning and the lack of a robust means of coordinating between the land and air component during the battle.¹³⁴ Any of the examples listed above, and the future threat challenges they could present, mean seamless integration with GPF air planners will be critical to survival for AFSOF.

¹³² Kamps, C. "Operation Kingpin: The Son Tay Raid: A 35-Years Retrospective," *Air & Space Power Journal*, (February 13, 2006), retrieved from: <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/apjinternational/apj/2006/1tri06/kampseng.html> (accessed February 6, 2008), 11.

¹³³ Richard Andres and Jeffrey Hukill, "Anaconda: A Flawed Joint Planning Process." *Joint Forces Quarterly* Issue 47 (4th quarter 2007), 135.

¹³⁴ Andres, 138.

Even in steady state Phase IV type operations, AFSOF benefits from GPF integration because of the force multiplication it provides. AC-130s regularly integrate into tactical situations with other attack aircraft or coordinate with other Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance platforms to find and engage targets. Large scale UW mobility requirements might exceed AFSOF's numbers and necessitate integration with conventional lift. All of these tactical examples won't succeed easily if the integrated operational planning hasn't been done. Furthermore, none of them succeed if the participants haven't been properly trained for the interaction.

5. TRAINING PLANS AND INTEGRATION

*In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is.*¹³⁵

-- Yogi Berra

Based on the future operating environment and AFSOF's relevance within it, the joint integration imperative is clear. With that foundation established, it is now important to review what is being done to achieve this integration. Specifically, what training is in place to prepare AFSOF to make integration a reality beyond what is written in doctrine? This chapter will examine the recognized training need and associated guidance, the training responsibilities, and the state of current training programs, with a focus on joint integration initiatives.

Understanding the need for SOF and GPF integration training exists at the highest levels within DOD. Unfortunately, given the current operations tempo and the inertia needed to transform cultural practices, translating this understanding into tangible training and true change is much more difficult. While important, the issue obviously goes beyond technological solutions and interoperability programs. Fortunately, the highest DOD training directives order a transformation in line with the recognized need for increased joint integration.¹³⁶

DOD's 2005 CCJO, the document which provides conceptual guidance for how the joint force is supposed to operate across the ROMO in the 2012-2025 timeframe,

¹³⁵ Yogi Berra Quotes, http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/y/yogi_berra.html (accessed 1 Oct 07).

¹³⁶ QDR, A-5.

explicitly has improving joint integration and unified action at its core.¹³⁷ Truly, the goal is beyond integration to actual service interdependence.¹³⁸

Towards this end, the DOD Training Transformation (T2) Program guides capabilities based joint training requirements for all forces and *exists* to transform training and education and improve integrated operations.¹³⁹ Furthermore, a directly stated goal of T2 strategy is to, “Develop an individual and collective training capability that supports special operations forces and conventional force integration.”¹⁴⁰

As part of T2, the Joint Training Functional Concept provides further specific guidance for the training attributes DOD is trying to instill via transformation.¹⁴¹ Its aim is vast and wide reaching towards T2’s goals. Regarding its proposed training process and environment, it states the following:

This will include formal education, training, exercises, and other learning for all DoD personnel, leveraging whatever teaching methods work. The process and environment will feature continuous learning via education, training, on-the-job guidance, and life experience. Individuals, units, and learning institutions will learn to support a joint military culture that rewards adaptability and innovation at all levels. It will support the development of leaders. The key enablers of this concept are the more unconventional, innovative, or pioneering technological advancements that integrate the live-virtual-constructive (LVC) environment. This integrated system will allow any force or individual to interact and train for any mission from any location. The resulting joint force will internalize joint attitudes and reactions and fight intuitively as an integrated joint force.¹⁴²

As seen in this quote, a “key enabler” to the T2 strategy is the Joint National Training Capability (JNTC), an integrated and distributed environment of live, virtual,

¹³⁷ CCJO, vii.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 17.

¹³⁹ Department of Defense, Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Strategic Plan for Transforming DOD Training*. Washington, D.C. (8 May 2006), ES-1.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴¹ Department of Defense, *Joint Training Functional Concept, Version 1.0*. Washington, D.C. (14 August 2007), 1.

¹⁴² Ibid.

and constructive (LVC) simulations available globally.¹⁴³ The technological ability to train in an LVC environment is meant to be a key medium to increase joint training, and hence integration capability. Planned full operational capability (FOC) for the JNTC is 2009.¹⁴⁴

Going beyond concepts, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3500.01.D begins to operationalize the T2 concepts and provides policy and guidance to the combatant commanders and services for joint training to enhance readiness.¹⁴⁵ On the first page of this instruction is the Chairman's joint training vision, "Everyone required to conduct military operations will be trained, under realistic conditions and to exacting standards, prior to execution of those operations. Personnel selected for joint assignments will be trained prior to reaching their duty location."¹⁴⁶ Taken by itself, this vision is fairly general. However, matched against the fact that integrated operations and IW are two of the Chairman's high interest training issues, it gains meaning relative to AFSOF and this paper's thesis.¹⁴⁷

Where does the responsibility lie to ensure this training becomes reality? The succinct and idealistic answer is that it lies with everyone in DOD, and AFSOF with the capacity to affect any aspect of how AFSOF trains, down to the individual aircrew member. There is some truth in this, albeit unrealistic, statement. Some of the most important integration training will have to occur at the grass roots level in individual operational units. However, the real authority, rendering larger scale and lasting impacts

¹⁴³ Department of Defense, Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. *Training Transformation Implementation Plan, FY 2006-2011*, Washington, D.C. (23 February 2006), 13.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., AP1-JNTC-13.

¹⁴⁵ Department of Defense, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3500.01D*, Washington, D.C. (31 May 2007), A-1.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., F-1.

for AFSOF and GPF integration is with USSOCOM, AFSOC, the geographic combatant commands, their TSOCs, and with SOCJFCOM. Title 10, USC, Section 167 charges USSOCOM with training its assigned forces and ensuring their interoperability with GPF and other SOF.¹⁴⁸ This joint training responsibility is shared with the geographic combatant commands and TSOCs as they develop effective training exercises to achieve the desired capabilities, like joint integration, with a focus on operating in the type of environment characteristic of that area of operations.¹⁴⁹ AFSOC conducts component training to ensure its units can accomplish their wartime missions via individual and collective tasks. Finally, SOCJFCOM has a training charter to assist USSOCOM and facilitate integration and improve SOF's joint effectiveness. Key to SOCJFCOM's role is the conduct of worldwide training for SOF and conventional staffs, and execution of exercise programs focused to improve SOF and conventional interoperability.¹⁵⁰ Each of these commands is responsible to recognize the integration imperative to ensure AFSOF is best prepared for the future operating environment.

USSOCOM does understand the integration training imperative, at issue is the matter of practical application from theory to reality for AFSOF. Accepted joint SOF doctrine clearly states, "Effective integration of conventional forces and SOF begins with peacetime planning and joint participation during training and exercises."¹⁵¹ Towards this end, USSOCOM has implemented a variety of training programs. Unfortunately, each has significant current limitations with regard to their impact on AFSOF personnel.

¹⁴⁸ JP 3-05, A-1.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., A-2.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ JP 3-05.1, III-8.

As part of their planning to accomplish their strategic objectives and address DOD transformation efforts, USSOCOM has developed five Joint Special Operations Keystone Capability Areas as part of its 2006 Capstone Concept for Special Operations (CCSO).¹⁵² One of the areas is directly related to integration training, called the Joint Special Operations Warrior (JSOW). The JSOW capability area is intended to mature into a comprehensive training process for SOF, addressing all required core competencies, including SOF integration and joint warfighting.¹⁵³ As part of this capability area, a Joint SOF Leadership Competency Model was created; with six competency clusters encompassing the required skill sets.¹⁵⁴ One of these is the force application cluster and includes within it operational art, joint and combined warfighting, and SOF integration.¹⁵⁵ As seen in Figure 8, the force application cluster is relevant across all levels of warfare. How does this model translate into actual training?

Analysis has shown the skills in the force application competency area have historically been lacking. A 2005 Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) education requirements analysis determined the joint SOF community was not well prepared for integrated planning or force application at the operational and strategic levels of warfare.¹⁵⁶ The same report revealed the following findings relevant to this paper: SOF leaders don't believe they are sufficiently prepared to operate at national policy, strategic, and theater operational levels; most personnel being assigned to key billets routinely arrive with little or no joint, joint SOF, or regional preparation appropriate to their assignment; joint SOF personnel are not educated to effectively understand or leverage

¹⁵² USSOCOM, *Capstone Concept for Special Operations* (2006), 13.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ JSOU Educational Requirements Analysis for Academic Years 2005-2010, ES-2.

the capabilities of the services, defense agencies, and other institutions; current SOF leadership hasn't been specifically educated to be able to fight the GWOT; rather, it continues to rely on learning informally via OJT; and there is no clear understanding of joint SOF capabilities among GPF and other government agencies.¹⁵⁷

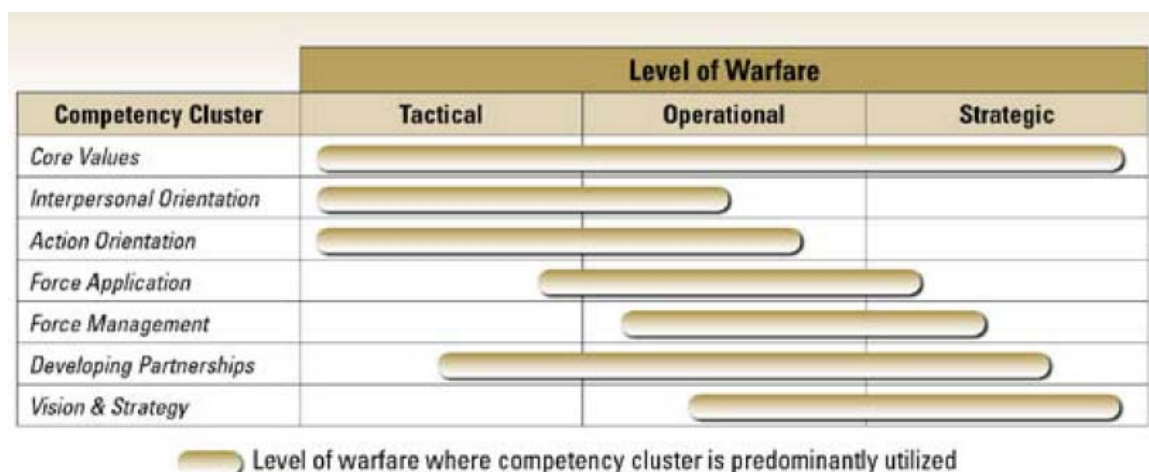


Figure 8. Joint SOF Competency Applicability¹⁵⁸

To address the report's findings and the CCSO JSOW vision, the JSOU has created and recently started a three-part program called the Joint Special Operations Warfighter Certificate (JSOWC) to attack the problem from the educational front. The JSOWC curriculum's includes three modules, strategic thinking for SOF planners, IW, and a joint special operations collaborative planning course.¹⁵⁹ This program will target mid-career commissioned officers (O-2 through O-4) and senior noncommissioned officers (E-6 through E-9).¹⁶⁰ The specific audience is those personnel preparing for,

¹⁵⁷ JSOU Educational Requirements Analysis for Academic Years 2005-2010, 35. Additional related and supporting references are on pages 37,61, and 73.

¹⁵⁸ USSOCOM CCSO, 14.

¹⁵⁹ John Prairie, Lt Col, USAF, JSOU Vice President, interview by author via email, November 7, 2007.

¹⁶⁰ John Prairie, "JSOU now offers Joint Special Operations Warfighter Course." *Tip of the Spear* (April 2007), 47.

enroute to, or assigned to their first joint headquarters.¹⁶¹ Two full programs are scheduled to run in FY08, with some traveling instruction as well.¹⁶²

It is yet unproven if JSOWC will have a major impact on AFSOF joint integration capability. This positive step to improve SOF's PME foundation faces a number of current challenges which hinder AFSOF's training. First, this training is currently not mandatory, nor is it integrated into a standard AFSOC pipeline entrance curriculum. This leads to an uneven and unplanned attendance by AFSOF members. This is true of the Air Force Special Operations School (AFSOS) as well. Currently, personnel tasked in advance to staff a SOLE or lead a JSOAC, go through courses offered by JSOU or the AFSOS, but this only targets a limited part of the AFSOF manning pool.¹⁶³ From the education side, it also doesn't solve the problem of learning how to integrate at the tactical, operational, and strategic level with GPF. With AFSOF units dispersed globally, and with no prioritization, how will AFSOF get the needed training coverage? JSOU is located in Florida, and only some AFSOF units are collocated. According to JSOU's 2005 requirements analysis, it isn't organized or resourced to meet its chartered responsibilities.¹⁶⁴ If this is the case, how frequently they'll be able to conduct mobile training to non-collocated units remains to be seen. Regardless of how capable JSOU's program is, until the program is mandatory, the AFSOF operations tempo will continually challenge attempts to create consistent training exposure in depth across the force.¹⁶⁵

Obviously, the educational facet is only one part of AFSOF's integration training requirement. AFSOF training faces limitations in other aspects as well. The nature of

¹⁶¹ Prairie, 47.

¹⁶² Prairie, interview.

¹⁶³ JSOU Resident Courses, <https://jsoupublic.socom.mil> (accessed March 1, 2008).

¹⁶⁴ JSOU Educational Requirements Analysis for Academic Years 2005-2010, 80.

¹⁶⁵ Prairie interview.

AFSOF's HD/LD operations tempo makes participation in large scale multi-service exercises difficult. For example, AFSOF rarely participates in Air Force Red Flag exercises or joint training at JRTC or NTC.¹⁶⁶ The tradeoff to attend these exercises, versus using the limited time available to complete normal mission essential task list (METL) training, is costly. These sites have seen a marked increase in ground SOF participation, but not from the AFSOF side due to the need to recuperate between real world missions.¹⁶⁷ Thus far, devising a training method to overcome the HD/LD operations tempo and its training implications are failing.¹⁶⁸ The USSOCOM staff recognizes they "must do more with less", but the proper mix is still elusive.¹⁶⁹

Future implementation of USSOCOM's Joint Expeditionary Special Operations Forces capability area, a means to create a globally persistent SOF presence, will not likely bring quick relief to AFSOF's tempo problem. A rotational expeditionary model works for units which are not constantly in demand, but AFSOF units are almost constantly in demand - a factor of the small force size. A key piece to this proposed capability is the USSOCOM Joint Operations Readiness and Training System (JORTS), which programs in mandatory reconstitution, individual, and joint training time after each deployment. This model has yet to see widespread consistent usage in AFSOF units, and its applicability is doubtful due again to their ops tempo. When will the majority of an AFSOC unit not be tasked on and off station for any dependable amount of time? This is the unfortunate disposition of being a key enabling component to SOF.

¹⁶⁶ Michael Kingsley, "Transformation Dilemma: Air Force Special Operations Command and the Role in the Future of the Air Force and Special Operations." SAASS master's thesis, Air University (April 2003), 34.

¹⁶⁷ Shannon Hume, MAJ, USA, USSOCOM J-7-AI, SOF I&I, interview by author via email, January 4, 2008.

¹⁶⁸ Hume, interview.

¹⁶⁹ Scott Curtin, Lt Col, USAF, USSOCOM SOKF/J-9, interview by author via email, November 29, 2007.

The reality is, deployed AFSOF training is typically with other SOF, and home station training is either unilateral or again with other SOF units. The requirement to maintain SOF specific mission skill sets is so robust, and much of the deployed or off-station training is in the form of exercises tied to Theater Security Cooperation Planning.¹⁷⁰ Scheduling joint AFSOF and GPF integration training into these exercises, in lieu of their intended TSCP intent, is difficult. Even when AFSOF participate in large joint exercises like Cobra Gold in Thailand or Foal Eagle in South Korea, there is little AFSOF to GPF integration, particularly at the tactical level. On the side of ground SOF, special operations and conventional units that are set to concurrently deploy to the same area have begun training together prior to deployment.¹⁷¹ This is an important initiative, but, as yet, untried with AFSOF. The character of air operations has AFSOF operating across huge areas, interacting with numerous ground and air users. This would require meshing non-aligned, pre-deployment schedules across many units. Fortunately, CAF tactics and procedures are standard enough that it doesn't matter with whom joint integration training occurs to gain the ability. Unfortunately, this baseline training isn't happening with AFSOF. Furthermore, much of the training that is dedicated to joint integration is oriented to the various staffs.¹⁷² While this is important and valuable, particularly at the operational level, staffs are made that much more effective if they can practice with actual large scale joint exercises, testing their integration planning and command and control. According to military historian Milan Vego,

¹⁷⁰ This inference is based off analysis the author's personal experience in AFSOC and also on analysis of the stated mission of the Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) program. JCETs make up a large part of AFSOF exercise participation for overseas units.

¹⁷¹ Hume, interview.

¹⁷² Ibid.

Combat training in peacetime should accompany education as a means of preserving and improving the skill necessary for the sound application of operational art. Among other things, exercises should serve as laboratories for validating ideas imparted during education...One of the potential problems in peacetime is the lack of large formations for exercises and maneuvers. This cannot but have a detrimental effect on the development of future operational commanders.¹⁷³

The counter argument might be made that the JTF or JSOTF staffs are the only entities that actually require the SOF and GPF integration training. However, the results from the JSOU requirements analysis show SOF members feel they receive the training too late in their careers, including those at staffs.¹⁷⁴ Additionally, operational experience has shown that training across the force is required. In OIF, there were numerous JSOTF and Joint Special Operations Air Detachment (JSOAD) staffs, all of which had to receive manning from outside of standing headquarters staffs.¹⁷⁵ Each of these staffs was conducting planning that had tactical and operational level implications.

With the HD/LD dilemma creating a dim training picture, increased emphasis is being placed on exercise participation via distributed mission training with simulators.¹⁷⁶ Mandated in September 1996, all AFSOC's simulators can network with one another and outsider virtual players.¹⁷⁷ In the last few years this capability has been tested with some success. In late 2007, the first joint virtual exercise involving AC-130 crewmembers from Hurlburt Field, Florida, and Marines from Marine Air-Ground Task force 29 Palms in California, took place with good success learning their respective tactics noted on both sides.¹⁷⁸ While training like this is promising, there are some limitations, primarily at the

¹⁷³ Milan Vego, "Operational Thinking." *Joint Operational Warfare*, Washington, DC: United States Naval War College, Joint Military Operations Department (September 2007), 12.

¹⁷⁴ JSOU Educational Requirements Analysis for Academic Years 2005-2010, 36.

¹⁷⁵ Jackson, 4.

¹⁷⁶ Curtin, interview.

¹⁷⁷ . Kingsley, 31.

¹⁷⁸ Joseph Coslett, "Historic virtual simulation joint training." *Tip of the Spear*, (August 3,2007),38.

tactical level, when it comes to achieving large scale impact on the AFSOF and GPF integration problem. First, the eleven year lag from mandate to achieving operational value is an indicator of what is already known - that virtual training is not a panacea or replacement for the stresses and rigors of the live training environment. Second, with the scarce number of simulators, only a limited number of crews can participate at a given time. Add to this that linked AFSOC simulators are only located in New Mexico and Florida, and the question arises of how this impacts AFSOF members in PACOM and EUCOM. Finally, with regard to spreading the training exposure amongst the force, the same HD/LD issues that impact live training will likely impact virtual training as well.

Like with simulators, USSOCOM has also made recent improvements towards SOF and GPF integration with newly written doctrine and manuals. As a prime example, a SOF and conventional forces integration checklist and handbook were recently released with a devoted focus on SOF and GPF integration and interoperability.¹⁷⁹ Unfortunately, without broad training to back up and practice what is inside those volumes, they may never reach their full potential.

Determining at what level the preponderance of SOF and GPF integration training should occur (strategic, operational, or tactical) is debatably beyond the scope of this paper. However, in light of how AFSOF members train and develop, disregarding the tactical level beyond interoperability concerns could have grave consequences. The reality of the situation is that if AFSOF personnel don't receive integration training at the tactical level early in their careers, it may have operational and strategic impacts later.

Not only will AFSOF members rising to leadership and staff positions not have the joint

¹⁷⁹ USSOCOM Pub 3-33, Conventional Forces (CF) and Special Operations Forces (SOF) Integration and Interoperability Handbook and Checklist, Version 2 (September 2006). The entire publication addresses the issue.

warfighting foundation to fall back on, they could be tactical weak links in wartime. If AFSOF operational artists can arrange and synchronize SOF efforts with GPF efforts, but the plans fail in application, then concentration on SOF and GPF integration solely at upper levels is ultimately ineffective.

Entering into AFSOF, at whatever stage in their career, aircrew members receive introductory lessons on what special operations are, at a very basic level, and then they receive their specific aircraft training.¹⁸⁰ There is no official training in joint SOF or GPF planning considerations. The fact that AFSOF's aircrew officers are tactical operators, focused on their individual tactical tasks for so long, exacerbates this enabler stovepipe. With only voluntary PME, like the JSOWC, and limited SOF to GPF integration training exposure, they are thrust into OJT learning conditions in crisis when the need for joint integration is immediate. Existing integration initiatives focus much of their effort on ground SOF, with less on AFSOF. It is outstanding that ground SOF gets this training and prioritization, but not focusing some of the effort on the supporting air enablers may create a vulnerability that will ultimately impact the ground force's ability to complete their missions.

Looking at the recognized joint integration training imperative and the actual training available to AFSOF, there is a clearly evident disconnect. PME for SOF and AFSOF is improving, but still doesn't guarantee solid exposure for the force. Likewise, there are promising advances in live and virtual training events, but the reality of the operations tempo and training prioritizations is still limiting the execution of AFSOF integration training. This disconnect is not a result of incompetence, poor planning, or ill will towards joint training. It is simply a result of SOF's and GPF's cultural

¹⁸⁰ This is based on the author's personal experience in AFSOC.

development, the historical process of a problem manifesting itself in a changing operating environment, and the training risk prioritization that results from a HD/LD force having to contend with ongoing wartime operations and its immediate training needs.

None of these reasons are rational to stop trying. To their own potential peril, the SOF and GPF community can't marginalize or ignore the AFSOF and GPF training imperative any longer. The path to making marked improvements is not easily discernable, but there are some options or themes to pursue.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The commander must be at constant pains to keep his troops abreast of all the latest tactical experience and developments, and must insist on their practical application.

He must see to it that his subordinates are trained in accordance with the latest requirements. The best form of welfare for the troops is first-class training, for this saves unnecessary casualties.¹⁸¹

--Field Marshal Erwin Rommel

AFSOF's experiences gained in current operations are not enough to drive or sustain an improved joint integration capability. The fight to move beyond joint deconfliction, to SOF and GPF integration and interdependence, will be an ongoing effort. True joint warfighting proficiency requires practice, new personnel require foundational training, and continually incoming new tactics and procedures need to be taught.

For AFSOF to see significant improvement in its integration capability, USSOCOM and AFSOC should continue to embrace the recommended force characteristics in the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations and T2 and force them down through all levels via formal and institutionalized training improvements. Without formal and mandatory training, integration training efforts will continue to lose in the cost benefit battle between the addition of new training and continuing with established practices. To gain inertia, AFSOC should make significant changes to how they prepare its members with PME and training, from the day they become part of AFSOF, and throughout their careers.

USSOCOM's JSOW capability area and JSOU's related efforts are vital to improving AFSOF's integration capability. All AFSOC members must be full participants in this career long continuum. To ensure this, the training pipeline for new

¹⁸¹ Erwin Rommel, quoted in Kingsley, 26.

AFSOC members should be standardized to include a more robust, up front, PME program, including integration training, with mandatory education at tracked key milestones throughout their careers. Conducting training up front could also alleviate some of the HD/LD pressure, as new members have yet to become irreplaceable assets. The concept of a Joint SOF Warfighters Course, recommended in the JSOU requirements analysis, should be part of mandatory AFSOF PME. A course like this would focus on current planning and operational issues, to include decision making within the context of a joint SOF and GPF environment.¹⁸² Coverage of operational level considerations down to tactical level planning would benefit AFSOF greatly. JSOU's programs should also continue to improve their distribution methods to increase coverage to those forces stationed outside the U.S.

As well as establishing an educational foundation to better prepare joint warfighters, AFSOF should also increase participation in joint exercises or add joint integration training components to the current set of standard exercises. Participation in USAF Red Flag and Green Flag exercises as well as JRTC and NTC training should be a goal, to include equal priority of effort to SOF missions or events as part of these exercises. Critical to this participation is the GPF's "buy-in" to the relevancy of AFSOF and GPF integration. More exercises should have SOF as the main effort, including IW emphasis, and with SOF in the lead. Furthermore, training exercises which historically focus on command and control or headquarters staffs, should strive to incorporate live or virtual tactical-level joint participation in their efforts.

As increased emphasis is placed on cost effective virtual training programs, consideration should be given as to how joint integration simulator training can have a

¹⁸² JSOU Educational Requirements Analysis for Academic Years 2005-2010, 43.

broad impact on AFSOF, considering much of the force isn't collocated with the simulators. A tracked rotational schedule or inclusion of integration training events into standard refresher syllabi could help ensure an event distribution of training exposure across the force.

Finally, finding a way to implement the USSOCOM JORTS model into AFSOF as a training standard would help facilitate dedicated joint training prior to deployment. Obviously, aircrew currency events require continual training, regardless of what part of the model the member is within, but the concept could serve to drive institutional changes to training and exercise scheduling.

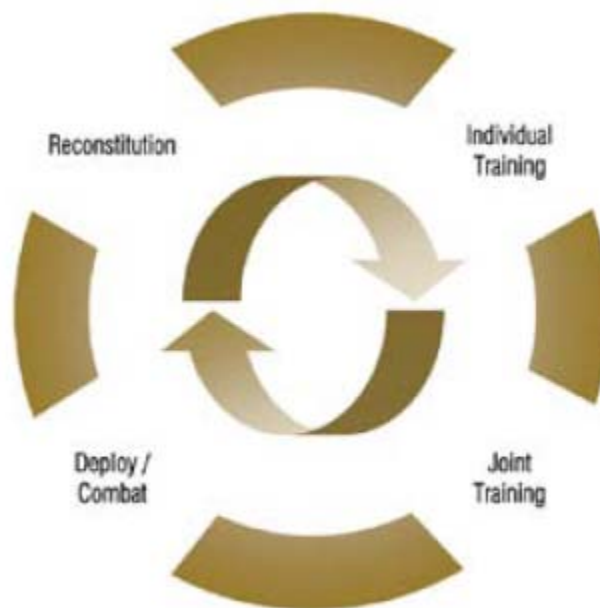


Figure 9. JORTS Model¹⁸³

Crucial to any new AFSOF and GPF integration training initiatives, is the need to document and rapidly distribute operational and tactical lessons learned to the force.

¹⁸³ USSOCOM CCSO, 12.

Establishing a process to improve lesson learned dissemination is a final means which AFSOF could use to overcome their dispersed and HD/LD nature. This should be a collaborative effort between USSOCOM, SOCJFCOM, AFSOC, and the TSOCs, with the final responsibility resting with USSOCOM.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Over twenty years ago former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral William Crowe, made the following edict during the USSOCOM activation ceremony:

...first, break down the wall that has more or less come between special operations forces and the other parts of our military...second, educate the rest of the military; spread a recognition and an understanding of what you do, why you do it, and how important it is that you do it. Last, integrate your efforts into the full spectrum of our military capability.¹⁸⁴

This was a quote from USSOCOM's first day. It is now twenty years later, has this decree been followed? The answer is yes, no, and it depends. It depends on the measurement of the degree of "education", "understanding", and integration of "efforts into the full spectrum" of military capability. It also depends on which part of SOF is being referred to. With respect to AFSOF, there are clearly improvements to be made. Even if AFSOF conducted joint integration training from their inception, there would need to be improvements, as the operating environment and necessities change.

The issue of AFSOF, SOF, and GPF integration will continue to require additional research. Towards the integration ends, it will be important to determine how much of the force or who within it, really needs extensive integration training to gain the desired effects at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. Is it really only critical for members of TSOCs or JSOTF staffs? Additionally, it will be valuable to research the necessary connection between staff training and actual training with fielded or virtual forces, as this could lead for solutions to the HD/LD problem. Can SOF mature as a well prepared force with distinctly separate training events? Finally, the issue goes well beyond DOD joint force integration to the other departments and agencies. How AFSOF

¹⁸⁴ Air University site, <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/cc/sofpaper.html>, (accessed 10 Dec 07).

and SOF will train with other IA members, particularly with the impending prevalence of IW, will be critical to investigate.

AFSOF can't afford to relegate the integration training imperative to one that is too hard to accommodate. Preparing for the next war, and not the last, means they can't accept the current limitations in integration capability. The SOF truth, "Humans are more important than hardware", definitely applies to being individually dynamic enough to succeed in the future joint operating environment.¹⁸⁵ AFSOF must have the proper training investment to make this happen and help ensure unified action in America's military operations.

¹⁸⁵ USSOCOM Posture Statement, 1.

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